



VICTORIAN  
CATCHMENT  
MANAGEMENT  
COUNCIL

# Victorian Catchment Management Council

## Annual Report 2018



Victorian Catchment Management Council Annual Report 2017-2018

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Cover photographs courtesy of Tracey Koper and Neil Meyers.

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## Chair's Foreword

The most significant event for 2017-2018 has been the tabling in Parliament of the *Catchment Condition and Management Report* (CCMR) in November 2017. Council is pleased with the report and compliments not only all our Secretariat but most importantly the many partner organisations who contributed to the final production. The four recommendations, made by Council within the report, are seen as a basis for complementing policies put in place to improve and enhance the state of our natural resource base across the state. I note variously the Catchment Management Authorities, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, the Office of the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability and Traditional Owner organisations for their collective contributions and cooperation prior to tabling.

Council was again pleased to participate in the annual Summit for Our Catchments Our Communities, held this year in the regional centre of Geelong. The themes were collaborative planning and delivery; community partnerships; demonstrating integrated catchment management outcomes and strengthening catchment partnerships with Traditional Owners. There were many networking and interactive opportunities throughout the day, and it was pleasing to see such a wide range of partners in integrated catchment management enjoying learning from one another, having robust discussions and looking forward to continued participation in integrated catchment management. Significantly, the Our Catchments Our Communities Leadership Development Grants recognised the excellence of particular individuals and their work. This year awards went to Kellie Nicholls – Women in Leadership, Kaleana Redland – Aboriginal Leadership, Bradley Costin – Innovation Grant and Leonie Duncan – Innovation Grant.

I recognise the participation of Council members in a wide range of roles across many aspects of integrated catchment management, supporting our many partner organisations at national, state and regional/local levels. Such interactions enhance our capacity to provide advice to government on a broad range of statewide issues, as required under legislation. Significantly, our visits to the Wimmera, East and West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority regions brought home to us the breadth of partnerships at a regional level and the degree of project activity which is delivering against both statewide Government policy as well as regional priorities.

I wish to congratulate and thank my fellow Council members for their outstanding contributions and acknowledge Amity Dunstan, Peta Maddy, Geoff Park, Alana Johnson, Joan Liley, Lance Lloyd and Helen Vaughan for all their hard work. I too mention here the continued dedication of our Secretariat; Patricia Geraghty, Neil Meyers and Tracey Koper. I also note with sadness and gratitude the short but outstanding contribution of Dr Phil Wallis (1982 – 2018), Project Manager for the *Catchment Condition and Management Report 2017*. The report is a valuable legacy for the Council and the broader community of integrated catchment management across the state.

In accordance with the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*, and the *Financial Management Act 1994*, I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Victorian Catchment Management Council for the year ending 30 June 2018.



Angus Hume  
Chair  
22 August 2018

## Introduction to the VCMC

Appointed under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (CaLP Act)*, the Victorian Catchment Management Council consists of up to 10 members appointed by Governor-in-Council on the basis of their skills, experience and knowledge of land protection, water resource management, primary industries, environment protection, conservation and local government.

### Council Members

Mr Angus Hume – Chairperson (1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018)

- Board member, Southern Rural Water
- Former Chair, West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority
- Former dairy farmer from South Gippsland
- Qualifications: Bachelor of Education and company directorship via Australian Institute of Company Directors
- Strong background in natural resource management over three decades
- Former Co-chair, Gippsland Lakes Co-ordinating Committee
- Involved in Landcare since 1997, initially as President of the Stony Creek Landcare Group
- Former CEO of Greening Australia NSW
- Expedition leader, Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions

Ms Amity Dunstan (1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018)

- Director of Row Crop Australia Pty Ltd
- Grain grower in southern Wimmera
- PhD candidate in Social Science
- Member of Federation University's Rural Incubator for Social and Economic Research
- Tutor at Federation University's Horsham and Ararat campuses
- Secretary of Telangatuk East Hall Committee
- VCMC delegate on the Interdepartmental Reference Group for the Victorian Rural Drainage Strategy 2016 – 2018
- VCMC delegate on the VRDS Implementation Working Group 2018

Ms Alana Johnson (1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018)

- Director, Goulburn Murray Water
- Ministerial Council for Women's Equality
- Victorian Rural Women's Network Reference Group
- President, Voices for Indi
- Founding Member, Australian Women in Agriculture
- Principal, Lurg Cattle Co.
- Landcare member since 1986
- Graduate, Australian Rural Leadership Program
- Graduate, Australian Institute of Company Directors
- Social Scientist and PhD Candidate, Monash University

Mrs Joan Liley (1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018)

- Member, Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Reference Group
- Chair, Central and South Gippsland Integrated Water Management Forum
- Committee member, Fish Creek Landcare
- Former Chair, South Gippsland Water
- Former Deputy Chair, West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority
- South Gippsland beef producer
- Bachelor of Commerce, Graduate Diploma Education
- Fellow, Australian Institute of Company Directors

Mr Lance Lloyd (1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018)

- Principal ecologist and Director of Lloyd Environmental Pty Ltd
- Honorary Research Fellow at Federation University Australia
- Chair, Great Australian Bight Resource Assessment Group, Australia Fisheries Management Authority
- Postgraduate degree in Science
- Past President of the River Basin Management Society
- Strong scientific background in catchment and water management
- Extensive consultation experience across the agricultural, community, environmental and business sectors

Ms Peta Maddy (1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018)

- Director, Southern Rural Water
- Chair, Interdepartmental Reference Group for the Victorian Rural Drainage Strategy
- Associate, Aither
- Previously Director, Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water, including Founding Chair of the Water Resources Committee (2015 to 2017)
- Past President, Victorian Branch of the Australian Water Association (2010 to 2013)
- Holds Bachelor of Chemical Engineering (Hon) and Science (Toxicology and Pharmacology)
- Graduate, Australian Institute of Company Directors

Mr Geoff Park (1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018)

- Director, Natural Decisions Pty Ltd
- Trustee, Norman Wettenhall Environment Trust
- Honorary Research Fellow, Dept of Forest and Ecosystem Science, University of Melbourne
- Former knowledge broker, North Central Catchment Management Authority
- Former team member, Future Farm Industries CRC (NRM investment frameworks)
- Holds Bachelor of Science (Hons.) and Diploma of Education

Ms Helen Vaughan – Secretary's Nominee (5 December 2017 – 30 June 2018)

- Deputy Secretary, Water and Catchments Group, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
- Former Regional Director, south-west Victoria with extensive experience in policy, research and policy implementation roles focused mainly on natural resource and emergency management
- BSc(Forestry) from Australian National University
- Employs a focus on developing constructive relationships with stakeholders and staff to ensure that priorities are well worked through and better outcomes achieved
- Brings different people together to gain different perspectives to develop robust approaches

## Council Staff

Patricia Geraghty  
Executive Officer

Neil Meyers  
Research and Policy Co-ordinator

Tracey Koper  
Project and Administration Officer

Philip Wallis (to 9 January 2018)  
Senior Project Manager

VCMC staff members are employees of DELWP - see DELWP 2017-18 Annual Report for statement of workforce data for current and previous financial year.

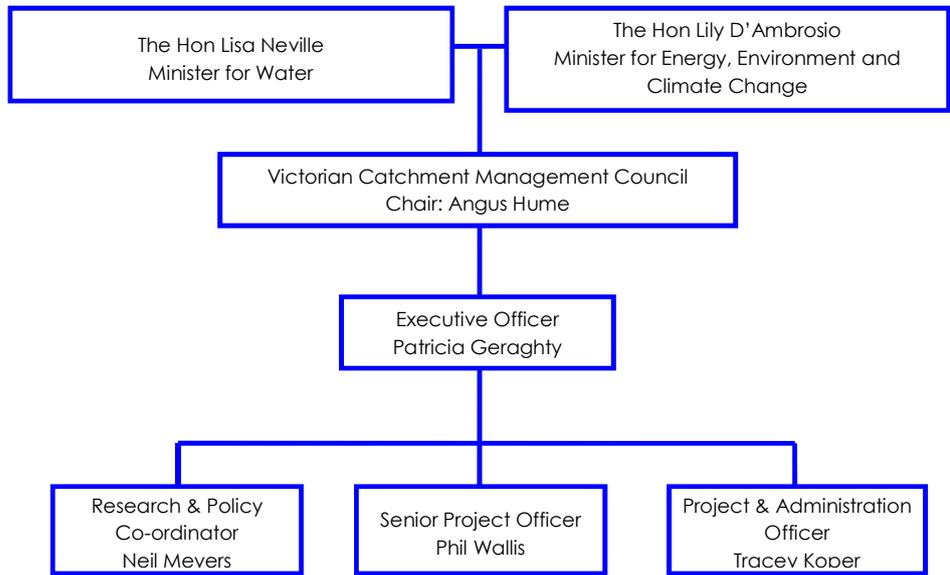
The VCMC secretariat employed four people (4 FTE) in 2017-18.

The breakdown of staff for the VCMC in 2017-18 is as follows:

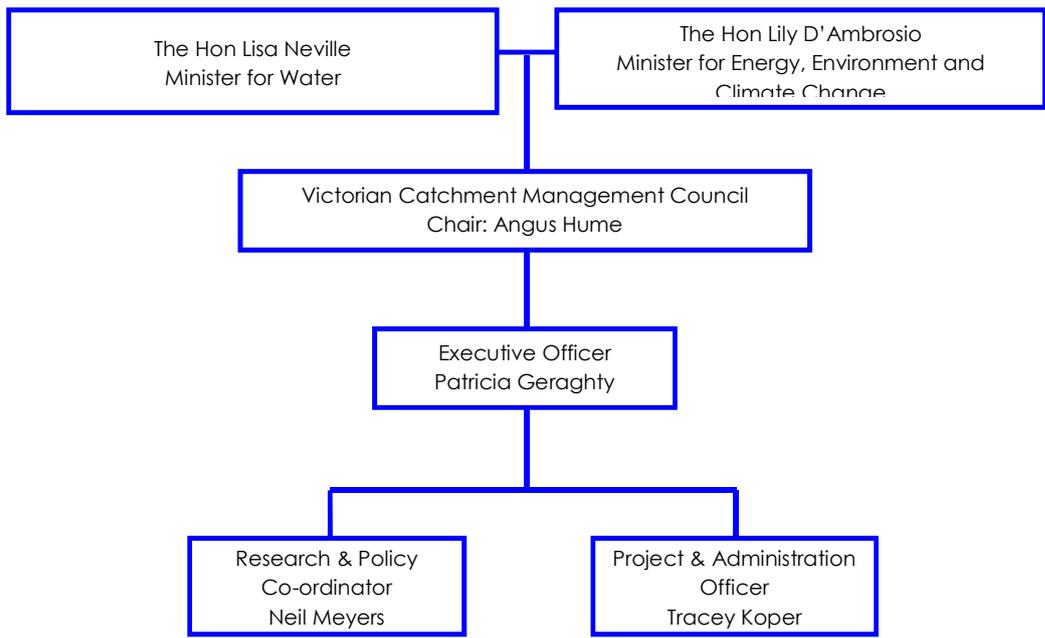
	2016-2017	2017-2018
Senior Management	1	1
Administration Staff	3	3
TOTAL	4	4
Male	2	2
Female	2	2
Self-described		0
TOTAL	4	4

# Organisational Structure

1 July 2017 – 9 January 2018



10 January 2018 – 30 June 2018



## **VCMC Role**

### **Background**

The Victorian Catchment Management Council (Council) is the state government's peak advisory body on catchment management, established under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (CaLP Act)* in 1997. The responsible Ministers for the 2017-18 reporting period were the Hon Lisa Neville MP, Minister for Water and the Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change.

The Council is uniquely placed, independent of government agencies, Catchment Management Authorities and non-government organisations, to take a long-term view and influence change in working towards its vision for catchment management:

*Victoria will have healthy rivers flowing through ecologically sustainable and productive catchments.*

Council takes a statewide view on land, water and biodiversity issues and priorities related to catchment management. It facilitates integrated and coordinated catchment management through Victoria's Catchment Management Framework. Council works particularly closely with DELWP and CMAs. Also, Council encourages cooperation of other bodies such as non-government organisations involved in the management of land and water resources.

Council continued the excellent and highly productive working relationship with its Ministers over this financial year, and provided confidential advice on several matters.

### **Partnerships**

Council works particularly closely with the Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) and with DELWP. In addition, Council encourages cooperation between the major sectors of local government, CMAs, community conservation and environment organisations, industry, state, regional and federal agencies by facilitating communication through various projects and forums. Council is also working to enhance relationships with numerous Traditional Owner organisations.

Council has a unique relationship with CMAs. It is not responsible for the operation of CMAs, nor does it oversee their work. However, Council must be receptive to issues emerging from the regions in developing a statewide position. It also provides the opportunity for CMAs to contribute to the policy and strategic picture at State level. Effective communication is critical to this process.

### **Statutory Roles**

Under Part 2, Section 9 of the *CaLP Act*, the functions of the Council are:

- (a) to advise the Minister and, if requested by any other Minister, that other Minister—
  - (i) on matters relating to catchment management which apply throughout the State; and
  - (ii) on the condition of the land and water resources of the State; and
  - (iii) on priorities for catchment management throughout the State; and
  - (iv) on priorities to be given on the need for research and investigation on matters related to catchment management which apply throughout the State;
- (b) to encourage the co-operation of persons and bodies involved in the management of land and water resources in furthering the objectives of this Act;
- (c) to promote community awareness and understanding of issues relating to catchment management;
- (d) to advise the Minister and provide information to the Minister on any matter referred to it by the Minister.

The Council is also required to advise the Minister under Part 8, Division 1 Section 69 (2), (3) and (4) of the *CaLP Act*, on actions before recommendation for the declaration or revocation of a declaration of any pest plant or animal:

- (2) Before recommending the declaration, or the revocation of a declaration, of an animal as an established pest animal the Minister must get advice on the proposal from the Council.
- (3) Before recommending the declaration, or the revocation of the declaration, of a plant as a noxious weed the Minister must get advice on the proposal from the Council and the Authority of the region in which the declaration applies or will apply.
- (4) The advice of the Council or an Authority under sub-section (2) or (3) must include—
  - (a) an assessment of the extent and severity of impact of the animal or plant in Victoria; and
  - (b) suggested measures for the management of any infestation of the animal or plant; and
  - (c) an estimate of the cost of these measures and how it might be funded.

- (5) The Minister may, in a particular case or class of cases, exempt the Council or an Authority from complying with sub-section (4).

Furthermore, under Part 4, Section 19 Division 2 'Action Statements and Critical Habitats' of the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act* (1988), the Council is to provide comment on list nominations and action statements:

19. Action statements

- (1) The Secretary must prepare an action statement for any listed taxon or community of flora or fauna or potentially threatening process as soon as possible after that taxon, community or process is listed.
- (2) The action statement must set out what has been done to conserve and manage that taxon or community or process and what is intended to be done and may include information on what needs to be done.
- (3) In preparing or amending an action statement the Secretary must consider –
  - (a) any management advice given by the Committee, the Conservation Advisory Committee and the Victorian Catchment Management Council; and
  - (b) any other relevant nature conservation, social and economic matters.

**VCMC Committees**

Under the *CaLP Act*, the Council may, from its members, appoint any committees that it considers necessary and may abolish any such committee; and determine the procedure of each committee. The nature and function of VCMC committees and working groups are described in the 'Operations of the VCMC' later in this report.

Members of Council were also involved individually in a range of other external committees in 2017-18. A list of these committees is provided in Appendix 2.

## Executive Officer's Comment

The major achievement of the Council over the past year was the timely completion of the *Catchment Condition and Management Report 2017*, tabled in Parliament in November 2017. The period July through to October was characterised by a strong commitment by Council members and staff to produce a useful, bold, accessible document. There were many robust discussions regarding the key messages and recommendations in the report. Feedback from a variety of stakeholders indicated that the decisions were about right: while catchment condition across the state was either stable or declining, management efforts over the past 20 years of Council reporting were recognised as positive and improving. Hence, further investment in effective management is essential if our catchments are to continue providing the services needed for social, environmental and economic well-being.

Other activities during the past year have involved setting up a collaborative group, under Council leadership, to develop guidelines for the next suite of Regional Catchment Strategies; involvement in the 'Our Catchments, Our Communities' committees and the Catchments Summit; participation in Vic Catchments and the Catchment Management Authority Chairs and CEOs groups; continued liaison with the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability and associated groups; productive and inspiring regional trips to the Wimmera, East and West Gippsland Catchment Management Authorities; and leading the first 'Women in catchment management' event in November 2017, part of the celebrations of the twentieth anniversary of the catchment management framework in Victoria. This range of activities illustrates the broad role of the Council, and the extent of its relationships across the catchment management sector.

I thank my ever-positive and enthusiastic Chair Angus Hume for his inspiring leadership of the Council during the past year and the Council members for their commitment to the goals in the Strategic Plan and beyond. Thanks to Neil Meyers and Tracey Koper, my experienced team members, who continued to support the Chair, Council and me in ways that are too numerous to record. Finally, I acknowledge the wonderful contribution of Dr Phil Wallis (1982 – 2018) in his role as Project Manager for the *Catchment Condition and Management Report 2017*. The report stands as a legacy to this brilliant, funny, admirable man. We will never forget him.



Patricia Geraghty  
Executive Officer  
22 August 2018

## Strategic Plan 2015 – 2018

### Preamble

The current Victorian Catchment Management Council (Council) was appointed in October 2015 with a three-year term. There was a new Chair, one continuing member and six new members. The focus in Council's strategic thinking is on the requirements of the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (CaLP Act), under which Council is established. The Strategic Plan was reviewed in late 2017 and agreed changes have been incorporated into this document.

### Vision

#### **'Victoria will have healthy rivers flowing through ecologically sustainable and productive catchments'**

The role of the Council is to positively influence the condition and management of land and water resources across Victoria's catchments through the provision of advice to the Ministers and to key stakeholders.

Council is a champion of integrated catchment management based on the first objective in the CaLP Act:

"...to establish a framework for the integrated and co-ordinated management of catchments which will maintain and enhance long-term land productivity while also conserving the environment; and aim to ensure that the quality of the State's land and water resources and their associated plant and animal life are maintained and enhanced."

**Functions** of Council are described in the CaLP Act, including:

- Providing advice to the Ministers on:
  - matters relating to statewide catchment management and the condition of land and water resources
  - priorities for catchment management
  - priorities for research and investigation related to catchment management
- Encouraging the cooperation of persons and bodies involved in the management of land and water resources and promote community awareness and understanding of catchment management issues
- Reporting on its activities annually, and in every fifth annual report to provide an assessment of the condition and management of land and water resources in the State, most recently in October 2012

#### **Additional functions**

These relate to the declaration or revocation of declaration of pest plant and animal species under the CaLP Act, *in addition to*:

- Specific functions under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*
- Compliance with the *Public Administration Act 2004* and other related acts

Council participates in relevant reviews of legislation, strategies and plans, including submissions where appropriate. These include the Water Plan, Biodiversity 2037 Strategy, Climate Change Framework, Victorian Rural Drainage Strategy and work around the changes to marine and coastal legislation and administrative arrangements.

#### **Drivers for 2015-2018 term**

1. Planning, drafting and completing the Catchment Condition and Management Report 2017 (CCMR 2017) for tabling in Parliament by 31 October 2017
2. Monitoring progress on the implementation of the four key recommendations in the CCMR 2017 by Council and other parties
3. Establishing Regional Catchment Strategy guidelines during 2018, with Council as Project Control Board

4. Providing advice on priorities on the need for research and investigation on matters related to statewide catchment management. Engagement with CMAs on this matter will occur through Vic Catchments.
5. Reporting on the operations of the CaLP Act; e.g. advice on requirement that more than one half of the members of the board of each CMA (other than the PPW CMA) must be persons whose principal occupation is primary production
6.
  - a. Advice as requested by the Ministers
  - b. Advice on topics decided by Council:
    - options for increased investment in integrated catchment management
    - significance of pest management issues, with a focus on deer
    - environmental-economic accounting
7. Aligning Victoria's environmental reporting efforts with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and with the Office of the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability

### **Strategic Goals**

These two goals are the key areas on which Council will focus its efforts over the 2015-2018 term. Council's actions in these two areas are envisaged as a vehicle for change, for improving the operations of the Catchment Management Framework.

1. Timely completion of a high-quality CCMR 2017
2. Leadership within the Catchment Management Framework, building on successive Councils' experience in catchment management

## Operations of the VCMC

### Performance against objectives, functions, powers and duties

The functions of the Victorian Catchment Management Council (Council) are described in the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (CaLP Act) S.9, comprising providing advice to the Minister/s:

- (i) on matters relating to catchment management which apply throughout the State; and
- (ii) on the condition of the land and water resources of the State; and
- (iii) on priorities for catchment management throughout the State; and
- (iv) on priorities to be given on the need for research and investigation on matters related to catchment management which apply throughout the State.

Council must also encourage the co-operation of persons and bodies involved in the management of land and water resources in furthering the objectives of this Act; promote community awareness and understanding of issues relating to catchment management; and advise the Minister/s and provide information to the Minister/s on any matter referred to it by the Minister/s. Additional functions relate to the declaration or the revocation of a declaration of pest plant and animal species under the CaLP Act, specific functions under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*; and compliance with the *Public Administration Act 2004* and other related acts. The current Council was appointed on 1 October 2015 and operated throughout the reporting year 2017-18. Helen Vaughan, Deputy Secretary of the Water and Catchments Group in DELWP was appointed as the Secretary's nominee to Council on 5 December 2017.

Council is an advisory body. Statutory obligations were met through the provision of confidential advice on a range of topics to the responsible Ministers for the 2017-18 reporting period. They were: The Hon Lisa Neville MP, Minister for Water and The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change.

During 2017 -18, Council submitted comments on the draft Victorian Rural Drainage Strategy and the State Environment Protection Policy (Waters). All submissions and advice involved active participation and support from the Council Secretariat staff. Council has been particularly interested in the implications of climate change on many aspects of catchment condition.

Advice was provided by Council through 2017-18 as required under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* on nominations for final listings supported or rejected by the Scientific Advisory Committee and responses to Draft Action Statements, for which details are found later in this report. All other matters of compliance with the *Public Administration Act 2004* and other relevant acts were met.

Note that S.9J in the CaLP Act requires Council to report on the operation of this act and the carrying out of its functions. In past annual reports, this requirement involved reporting on various programs and projects undertaken by the Catchment Management Authorities and by central agencies, within the integrated catchment management framework. These reports are available elsewhere, and can be found in the annual reports of these authorities and agencies, and thus are not duplicated here.

### Performance against operational and budgetary objectives, including initiatives and key achievements

The key ongoing objectives for Council were its statutory obligations, comprising the provision of confidential advice to the relevant Ministers as described in the previous section. In most cases, this was in response to a verbal or written request but in some cases, Council provided advice which it decided was of significance. All advice was provided in a timely manner.

The budget was \$603,000.00 (refer to VCMC Finance Report). The overall expenditure for the 2017-18 period was \$603,000.00 resulting in a variance of 0%. This was within Council's budgetary objective of 10% or less variance.

Council was referred to in the implementation of DELWP's (formerly DEPI) VAGO Action Plan, which responded to the Victorian Auditor-General's 2014 report on the audit *Effectiveness of Catchment Management Authorities*. Accordingly, Council was advised in May 2015 that the Water and Catchments Executive in DELWP approved a one-off grant of \$200,000 to assist Council's participation in that implementation of the Action Plan over the period 2015-17.

This grant enabled the Chair to lead the VAGO Action Plan Project Control Board, staff to deliver key input to project teams and initial planning for the Catchment Condition and Management Report (CCMR) 2017

project during 2016-17. In this past year, the grant was used for supporting staff in the development and delivery of the CCMR. Council's catchment condition and management reporting work continued alongside the VAGO Action Plan process during 2017-18 with Angus Hume chairing the Our Catchments Our Communities Strategic Reference Group and the Executive Officer Patricia Geraghty on the Our Catchment Our Communities Implementation Committee.

Council's work based around catchment condition and management reporting over the past year directly related to the major goals in the Strategic Plan: developing and completing the *Catchment Condition and Management Report 2017*; and providing leadership to the Catchment Management Framework.

The development and delivery of Council's *Catchment Condition and Management Report* was overseen by the whole of Council as the Project Control Board for the project. The project was led superbly by Project Manager Dr Philip Wallis (July 2016 – January 2018). The period July – September 2018 was intense, with chapter conclusions, and overall recommendations being the subject of rigorous discussions among Council and staff, plus the editing, formatting and proof-reading activities prior to publication.

A Technical Advisory Group comprising staff from VCMC, DELWP, the Office of the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability was established in 2016. Four eminent reviewers provided comments on each of the three versions of the report and there was targeted consultation, focused on the members of the already existing Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability's Environmental Reporting Project Control Board. There were also several opportunities for the CMAs to provide feedback on the regional sections in the report, including a final round in July-August 2017.

The report was finalised and submitted to the Ministers in early October 2017, satisfying the requirement in the CaLP Act, and was tabled in Parliament on 14 November 2017. An easily accessible summary of the report was posted on the VCMC website later that month.

Phil Wallis undertook an extensive evaluation of the project, including a number of open-ended survey conversations with key participants. Following Phil's death, the evaluation report was completed by Patricia Geraghty in February 2018. The report concluded with key recommendations for future reporting:

- Continue to report in the five themes: land, water, biodiversity, coasts and community
- Engage with CMAs in their regions (as per the round table discussions) and ensure regional partners are present at these
- Begin Traditional Owner engagement earlier in the process
- Carefully consider the role and size of any Council sub-committees
- Invest early in website development, provided adequate resources are available

A record of all feedback on the *Catchment Condition and Management Report 2017* was kept.

The extensive work involved in drafting the Victorian Rural Drainage Strategy (VRDS) was undertaken with Peta Maddy as the independent Chair of the VRDS Inter-departmental Reference Group, and Amity Dunstan appointed as the Council representative on that Reference Group. Amity continued representing the Council on the VRDS Implementation Working Group.

During 2017-18, Council set up a collaborative process to develop the guidelines for the next suite of Regional Catchment Strategies, as its role under the CaLP Act. The process started in September 2017, with the first meeting of the Working Group in October. Mid-term reviews of the current RCSs were approved by each CMA Board and sent to Council and to DELWP during 2017. Recommendations from the reviews were useful to the RCS Guidelines Working Group comprised Angus Hume (Chair), Geoff Park and Patricia Geraghty (VCMC), David Buntine and Chris Norman (CMA CEOs), and Adam Hood and Luke Murphy (DELWP), and supported by Tracey Koper and Neil Meyers. Two workshops with the Working Group and RCS Managers from all CMAs were held in December 2017 and March 2018. Insights from the workshops enabled the Working Group to start developing draft RCS Guidelines in May 2018. The aim is to have a well-developed draft ready for Council endorsement by the end of its term.

Council members and staff also participated in conferences, workshops, committees and many regional activities. These included several of the public consultation events regarding the draft Victorian Rural Drainage Strategy, the Landcare Victoria Inc. AGM and Forum, the National NRM Chairs' meeting in Darwin, a presentation by Geoff Park to North East CMA's Strategic Planning day, lectures by Patricia Geraghty at Melbourne University and at Deakin University on catchment management in Victoria, Neil

Meyers representing Council on the Victorian Inter-agency Invasive Species Committee and at the Centre for Aquatic Pollution Identification and Management Research Summit, Victorian Rabbit Action Network workshop, and Systemic Inquiry workshops.

Links with the Office of the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability continued to strengthen over the past year, with an agenda and agreement around collaboration, removing duplication and a shared reporting framework. Angus Hume was on the Commissioner's Environmental Reporting Project Control Board to guide the development of State of the Environment reporting and Philip Wallis was appointed to the Commissioner's Technical Advisory Group, replaced by Patricia Geraghty in February 2018. Council member Joan Liley was appointed to the Commissioner's Stakeholder Reference Group.

Council staff Patricia Geraghty (Convenor) and Tracey Koper initiated a Working Group to plan and organise two celebrations to mark the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the Victorian Catchment Management Framework in 2017. The other representatives were Joanne Green and Elodie Chene from the Catchments Branch in DELWP and Paula Camenzuli from the West Gippsland CMA. The first event at Queen's Hall on 28 June 2017 was reported in last year's Annual Report and celebrated the catchment management sector's achievements over 20 years. The second event was the first 'Women in Catchment Management' gathering at the Leopard Lodge at Melbourne Zoo on 16 November 2017. Nearly 100 women participated, with keynote presentations from Jenny Collins, CEO Mallee CMA; Michelle Cooper, General Manager Threatened Species, Melbourne Zoo, Kylie Trott ED Regional Victoria at Parks Victoria and Fern Hames, Science Manager Communications and Collaboration at the Arthur Rylah Institute. The MCs were Helen Vaughan, Deputy Secretary WCG and Joan Liley, VCMC member. 12 hosted conversation tables were held in the afternoon, focusing on the themes of the day: coaching and mentoring, women in science, work-life balance, diversity and inclusion, and career journeys and opportunities in catchment management. Despite the inclement weather the day went very well. Evaluation by survey straight after the event showed that 95% of participants rated the event as Excellent/Very Good; 100% rated the speakers as Excellent/Very Good; and 93% said they were Extremely Likely/Very Likely to attend a similar event in the future

Vic Catchments was established as an industry- wide grouping of CMA Chairs supported by an Executive Officer and as a vehicle for building partnerships and exchanging information. Council's Chair and Executive Officer have ex officio membership, along with the CMAs CEOs, in the Forum, ensuring the continuing close relationship of Council with the CMAs. Patricia Geraghty is in the CMA CEOs' Group and was nominated as a member of its Strategy and Planning Portfolio. She was also involved in the CEOs' work on strategic priorities for Vic Catchments, based on significant landscapes.

Visits were undertaken by Council to the Wimmera region on 8-9 August 2017 and to the East Gippsland and West Gippsland CMA regions on 8-10 May 2018. The Wimmera tour started with a briefing at the CMA office in Hamilton by CEO David Brennan, who gave an overview of the area and an outline of the tour program. There was also an inspiring presentation on the range of indigenous engagement activities, either led by or partnered with the CMA, including cultural awareness programs for children. Statutory and Strategy Manager, Tony Baker was the tour guide for the next two days. We travelled to various sites, demonstrating different sorts of partnerships with organisations including Trust for Nature, Bank Australia and DELWP. We spent the night at the Little Desert Nature Lodge, which is run by Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA). At dusk, we visited the area fenced off for the reintroduction and management of species including Western Barred Bandicoots and bettongs, part of the 'Rewilding the Desert' program, which is managed by CVA and FAUNA Research Alliance. We were joined for dinner by guests including CMA Board members and staff, and were briefed on the CVA and its activities by Ian Walker.

The Gippsland tour started in Bairnsdale and Council members and staff travelled in convoy with the Chair, CEO and staff from the EGCMA, plus the CEO of the WGCMA, to the iconic Snowy River. Various sites along the Snowy River were visited, showing the outcomes of work over the past 20 years, including the removal of willows, bank stabilisation, and exclusion of stock by fencing. The importance of gaining the trust of private landholders, frequently over the long-term, so that activities could be undertaken in partnership was emphasised. It was wonderful to see what revegetation occurs once riparian areas were fenced, with some replanting of the understorey species necessary but with the trees coming back naturally. On the second day, we were hosted by WGCMA, exploring the Sale swing bridge area and then some of the extensive fringing wetlands of the Gippsland Lakes. Various restoration areas were visited, with briefings by WGCMA staff and partners including Greening Australia. Two endangered frog species were seen in considerable

numbers in some small fenced off springs on private land. We also visited the Heart Morass, being slowly restored by partnering with Field and Game Australia, and the Loy Yang open-cut coal mine.

Council members were impressed with the enthusiasm of the three CMAs we visited at all levels, their focus on demonstrating outcomes in the longer term, and their active engagement with the many partners involved in environmental improvement in their region.

The second Catchments Summit was held on 14 June 2018 at Geelong. Angus Hume was involved in its planning as Chair of the Our Catchments Our Communities Strategic Reference Group. Alana Johnson stepped in at short notice to officially open and close the Summit since Angus was unavailable at that time. Alana also led a workshop session on new ways of engaging the community. This was very well-received. Patricia Geraghty facilitated a session on different models for engaging our community, involving speakers from Landcare Vic Inc., local government, two CMAs, a landcare network, a Trust and the Woka Walla works crew. Alana and Helen Vaughan hosted the awarding of Leadership Development Grants at the end of the day. These grants support the development of the next generation of catchment leaders in Victoria. Overall, the Summit highlighted the range of thriving partnerships occurring across Victoria, some new thinking about integrated catchment management and lively discussions about the challenges and opportunities ahead.

## VCMC Finance Report

The following table outlines operating revenue and expenditure for the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 financial years.

VCMC Financial Report 2013-14 to 2017-18.

	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-16	2016-17	2017-2018
<b>Operating Revenue</b>	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
DELWP Allocation	530,663	728,929	701,089	689,940	603,000
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>530,663</b>	<b>728,929<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>701,089<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>689,940</b>	<b>603,000</b>

<b>Expenses</b>	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
	490,982	515,275	490,089	645,602	603,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>490,026<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>515,275</b>	<b>490,089</b>	<b>645,602</b>	<b>603,000</b>

Notes:

1. There was approval from DELWP in October 2013 for a carry-over of \$46,000 from the 2012-13 financial year, mainly to fund regional visits. This additional funding was loaded into the budget in February 2014. Two regional visits were then organised for March and May 2014, before the end of the financial year.
2. An additional \$200,000 was received from DELWP in May 2015, in the form of a one-off grant to assist the Council's participation in the implementation of DELWP's Action Plan which responds to the Victorian Auditor-General's Report on the Effectiveness of Catchment Management Authorities.
3. This grant enabled continuing participation in the Action Plan activities (refer Note 2) and to further the Council's relevant work on catchment condition and management reporting over the period 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, in alignment with the goals in *Our Catchments Our Communities*.

VCMC, in conjunction with DELWP, has transitioned its accounting policies and financial reporting from current Australian Standards to Australian equivalents of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

### Significant Changes in Financial Position and Performance, and Subsequent Events

There were no matters which changed the Council's performance or financial position during the 2017-18 reporting period. Further, there were no subsequent events which will have a material impact on the Council's future operations or financial position that occurred after this report was finalised.

### Financial Management Compliance Attestation

I, Angus Hume, on behalf of the Responsible Body, certify that the Victorian Catchment Management Council has complied with the applicable Standing Directions of the Minister for Finance under the *Financial Management Act 1994* and Instructions.

## Statutory Responsibilities

### VCMC Meetings

	July 17	September 17	October 17	November 17	December 17	February 18	March 18	April 18	June 18
Angus Hume	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lance Lloyd	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Amity Dunstan	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		
Geoff Park				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Peta Maddy			✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Alana Johnson	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Joan Liley		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Helen Vaughan							✓	✓	✓

\*Helen Vaughan was appointed to the VCMC on 5 December 2018

All absences were approved by the Chair prior to each meeting.

### Freedom of Information

The VCMC is considered to be a "Government Agency" under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act) and is required to comply with the procedures that have been prescribed under which members of the public may gain access to information held by agencies. A decision to release information is made by an Authorised Officer. The VCMC has determined that its Authorised Officer is the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning Freedom of Information Manager, Ms Kim Reeves (03) 9637 9730.

During 2017-18, no requests were received for access to documents under the *FOI Act 1982*.

Documents which are maintained in the possession of Council include:

Internal working papers;

- Correspondence from Ministers and Members of Parliament, Government Departments and agencies, members of the public and the private sector;
- Reports prepared by consultants commissioned by Council;
- Accounts records;
- Personnel and salary records; and
- Organisation and accommodation records.

You have a right to apply for access to documents held by VCMC and covered by the *FOI Act 1982*. This applies to both documents created by VCMC as well as those supplied to VCMC. You may apply for the original or for a copy.

FOI requests (\$28.90) must be made in writing to:

Ms Kim Reeves  
 Freedom of Information Manager  
 Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning  
 P.O. Box 500  
 East Melbourne Vic 3002

Tel: (03) 9637 9730  
Email: kim.reeves@delwp.vic.gov.au

Requests should be as specific as possible to enable the FOI Authorised Officer to identify relevant documents as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Once your letter requesting access has been received, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning must respond to you as soon as possible, but not later than 45 days, outlining its decision on your request. If the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning refuses you access to the documents sought, you can appeal to the Principal Officer (Patricia Geraghty, Executive Officer) for an internal review, but you must do so within 28 days of the letter sent to you. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning must then reconsider your request and respond to you within 14 days.

If you wish to appeal further to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, you must do so within 60 days of the date you were notified of the internal review.

### **Consultancies**

The VCMC commissioned no consultancies >\$10,000 in 2017-18.  
The VCMC commissioned no consultancies <\$10,000 in 2017-18.

### **Competitive Neutrality Policy**

Competitive neutrality requires government businesses to ensure where services compete, or potentially compete with the private sector, any advantage arising solely from their government ownership be removed if it is not in the public interest. Government businesses are required to cost and price these services as if they were privately owned. Competitive neutrality policy supports fair competition between public and private businesses and provides government businesses with a tool to enhance decisions on resource allocation. This policy does not override other policy objectives of government and focuses on efficiency in the provision of service.

The Victorian Catchment Management Council continues to comply with the requirements of the Competitive Neutrality Policy.

### **Victorian Industry Participation Policy Act**

The *Victorian Industry Participation Policy Act 2003* requires a public body to apply Local Jobs First – Victorian Industry Participation Policy in all procurement and project activities valued at:

- \$3 million or more in metropolitan Melbourne and for statewide projects; and
- \$1 million or more in regional Victoria.

The VCMC had no contracts that were commenced or completed in the 2017-18 period to which Local Jobs First – Victorian Industry Participation Policy applied.

### **Major Contracts**

There were no major contracts valued at \$10 million or more entered into in 2017-18.

### **Protected Disclosures Act**

The *Protected Disclosure Act 2012* (PD Act) enables people to make disclosures about improper conduct by public officers and public bodies. The Act aims to ensure openness and accountability by encouraging people to make disclosures and protecting them when they do.

There were no disclosures made under the *Protected Disclosures Act 2012* during the 2017-18 reporting period.

### **What is a 'protected disclosure'?**

A protected disclosure is a complaint of corrupt or improper conduct by a public officer or a public body. The Victorian Catchment Management Council is a "public body" for the purposes of the Act.

### **What is 'improper or corrupt conduct'?**

Improper or corrupt conduct involves substantial:

- mismanagement of public resources; or
- risk to public health or safety or the environment; or
- corruption.

The conduct must be criminal in nature or a matter for which an officer could be dismissed.

### **How do I make a 'Protected Disclosure'?**

You can make a protected disclosure about the Victorian Catchment Management Council or its council members, officers or employees by contacting DELWP or IBAC on the contact details provided below.

Please note that the Victorian Catchment Management Council is not able to receive protected disclosures.

### **How can I access the Victorian Catchment Management Council's procedures for the protection of persons from detrimental action?**

The Victorian Catchment Management Council uses established procedures from DELWP for the protection of persons from detrimental action in reprisal for making a protected disclosure about the Victorian Catchment Management Council or its employees. You can access DELWP's procedures on its website at: [www.delwp.vic.gov.au](http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au).

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)  
Jennifer Berenson, Senior Advisor, Privacy and Ombudsman  
PO Box 500, East Melbourne Vic 3002.  
Telephone: 03 9637 8697  
Email: [jennifer.berenson@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:jennifer.berenson@delwp.vic.gov.au)  
Website: [www.delwp.vic.gov.au](http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au)

Independent Broad-Based Anti-Corruption Commission (IBAC) Victoria  
Level 1, North Tower, 459 Collins Street Melbourne 3000  
Mail: IBAC, GPO Box 24234 Melbourne 3001  
Website: [www.ibac.vic.gov.au](http://www.ibac.vic.gov.au)  
Phone: 1300 735 135

Email: see website above for the secure email disclosure process, which also provides for anonymous disclosures

### **Employment and Conduct Principles**

Victorian Public Service employment and conduct principles are applied in the appointment and management of staff. The VCMC follows the principles used by DELWP, in accordance with Government directives.

Public entities are required to have in place employment processes that will ensure that:

- employment decisions are based on merit;
- public sector employees are treated fairly and reasonably;
- equal employment opportunity is provided;
- human rights as set out in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities are upheld; and
- public sector employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment.

Codes of conduct and standards issued by the Victorian Public Sector Commission (VPSC) include:

- the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees
- the Conflict of Interest Policy Framework and the Gifts Benefits and Hospitality Policy Framework

For further information, please refer to the VPSC's website ([www.vpsc.vic.gov.au](http://www.vpsc.vic.gov.au)).

### **Building Act**

VCMC does not own or control any government buildings and consequently is exempt from notifying its compliance with the building and maintenance provisions of the *Building Act 1993*.

## **Environmental Reporting**

Under FRD24C, CMAs are classified under the "other public sector entities", and are encouraged to adopt the requirements of this Financial Reporting Direction. The FRD24C requirements are not mandatory for public agencies; they apply only to Government Departments, the Environment Protection Agency and Sustainability Victoria. The VCMC has been incorporated in DELWP's Environmental Reporting under FRD24C.

### **Additional VCMC Information Available on Request**

In compliance with the requirements of the Standing Directions of the Minister for Finance, details in respect of the items listed below have been retained by the Victorian Catchment Management Council and are available (in full) on request, subject to the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*:

- (a) Details of publications produced by the Victorian Catchment Management Council about itself
- (b) A statement of completion of declarations of pecuniary interests by relevant officers

The information is available on request from:  
The Project Officer  
Victorian Catchment Management Council  
Phone: (03) 9637 9892  
Email: tracey.koper@delwp.vic.gov.au  
Web: www.vcmc.vic.gov.au

### **Additional information included in annual report**

Details in respect of the following items have been included in the Victorian Catchment Management Council's annual report, on the pages indicated below:

- (a) a list of the Victorian Catchment Management Council's major committees; the purposes of each committee; and the extent to which the purposes have been achieved (*on page 20*).

### **Government Advertising Expenditure**

VCMC's expenditure in the 2017-18 reporting period on government campaign expenditure did not exceed \$100,000.

### **Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Expenditure**

For the 2017-18 reporting period, VCMC had a total ICT expenditure of \$0.  
"ICT Expenditure" refers to VCMC's costs in providing business enabling ICT services.

## Compliance Disclosure Index

Legislation	Requirement	Page reference
<b>Ministerial Directions</b>		
FRD 22H	Manner of establishment and the relevant Ministers	7
FRD 22H	Objectives, functions, powers and duties	7
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FRD 10A	Disclosure index	21
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FRD 22H	Occupational health and safety policy	*
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	<i>Financial Management Act 1994</i>	2

\* See DELWP Annual Report 2017-18

## Committees and Working Groups that included a member or staff member of VCMC in 2017-2018

<b>Group Name</b>	<b>VCMC Representative</b>
CMA CEOs Forum	Patricia Geraghty
CMA CEOs' Strategy and Planning Portfolio Group	Patricia Geraghty
CMA Chairs Forum	Angus Hume
CMA Communication Officers Forum	Tracey Koper
Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability's State of the Environment Reporting Reform Project Control Board	Angus Hume
Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability's State of the Environment Stakeholder Reference Group	Joan Liley
Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability's State of the Environment Technical Advisory Group	Patricia Geraghty/Philip Wallis
DELWP MER Working Group	Neil Meyers
DELWP Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management Magazine Editorial Committee	Tracey Koper
Environmental-Economic Accounting Implementation Working Group	Philip Wallis
Our Catchments Our Communities Goal 5: Improved monitoring, evaluation and reporting Working Group	Philip Wallis
Our Catchments Our Communities Implementation Committee	Patricia Geraghty
Our Catchments Our Communities Strategic Reference Group	Angus Hume
VAGO Implementation Action 1 Project Team	Patricia Geraghty
VAGO Implementation Action 4 Project Team	Neil Meyers
VAGO Implementation Project Control Board	Angus Hume
Vic Catchments	Angus Hume, Patricia Geraghty
Victorian Catchment Management Forum	Angus Hume, Patricia Geraghty
Victorian Rural Drainage Strategy Interdepartmental Reference Group	Amity Dunstan

## **VCMC activities and responsibilities under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988***

Nominations for final FFG listings supported by the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and VCMC:

### **Taxa**

Black Falcon (*Falco subniger*)

Matchstick Grasshopper (*Keyacris scurra*)

### **Communities**

There were no communities identified and supported for listing under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* by the SAC and VCMC.

### **Potentially Threatening Processes**

There were no potentially threatening processes identified and supported for listing under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* by the SAC and VCMC.

### **VCMC Responses to Draft Action Statements:**

Under Section 19 (1) of the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, the Secretary must prepare an action statement for any listed taxon or community of flora or fauna or potentially threatening process as soon as possible after that taxon, community or process is listed. Under Section 19 (3) of the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, the Secretary must consider any management advice given by the Victorian Catchment Management Council.

There were no Draft Action Statements provided for comment during 2017-2018.

### **Declaration of Pest Plants and Animals**

VCMC Activities and responsibilities under Section 69 the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*

Before making a declaration of a species as an established pest species on public land in Victoria, the Minister must get advice on the proposal from the VCMC.

During 2017-2018, the Minister sought advice from the VCMC on the recommendation to declare the feral cat as an established pest animal.





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