

**Water Summit**  
Parliament House, Melbourne

**COMMUNIQUE**

T. J. Laidler  
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**The Summit heard that Victoria is committed to:**

- sustainable water use
- “triple bottom line” integration of economic, social and environmental objectives
- protecting the health of the community through the excellent management of our freshwater supplies and wastewater systems
- keeping Victoria’s water authorities in public ownership
- seeking opportunities for partnerships with the private sector and local communities in developing water systems management
- making Victoria a world leader in eliminating wastage in our water cycle management
- the policy objectives of:
  - cleaner water and healthy catchments,
  - smarter water use and
  - water for growth and vibrant communities

**The Summit understand that to achieve these objectives the Victorian Government has:**

- secured agreements to increase flows to the Snowy and Murray Rivers (\$165m)
- developed the Victorian River Health Strategy (\$10.6m) and the Gippsland Lakes Rescue package (\$11.8m)
- allocated \$157m to implementing the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality
- developed a regulatory framework for drinking water quality
- introduced a Statewide water conservation campaign and the development of water conservation plans by all urban water authorities
- developed a Water Resources Strategy for Melbourne and a Statewide Water Recycling Strategy
- set a 20% target for recycling effluent from the Carrum and Werribee Treatment Plants by 2010
- provided \$77m for the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline Project
- committed \$30m for the Water for Growth program
- developed active water markets in Northern Victoria and introduced new farm dams legislation
- committed to independent economic regulation of the water industry by the Essential Services Commission

**It was announced at the Summit that the Government would:**

- establish a Smart Water Fund to demonstrate innovative and sustainable water use (\$4m)
- use recycled water from the Western Treatment Plant to tap the potential of the Werribee region and achieve its Werribee Vision
- establish a State of Water Unit to work with industry, the finance sector and other agencies on developing the Werribee Vision Action Plan and other collaborative projects
- review the financial regimes and practices of the water industry to create an environment that encourages private sector partnerships
- announced a major project by Central Highlands Water to develop a reuse scheme for Ballarat North and Creswick (\$30m)

**The Summit believes the Victorian community also needs to consider:**

- the urgency with which we need to act proactively, aggressively and innovatively to best manage the state's water resource and to protect our environment
- looking at the "environmental footprint" / "ecological footprint" of proposed strategies for water systems management
- need to look at quadruple bottom line
- Government taking a "lead role" in safety assurance
- Government taking a "lead role" in recycling and reuse in its own projects
- mandating reuse in new developments
- ensuring integrated water cycle management within catchments or urban areas
- sponsoring research into water system management generally but particularly innovative wastewater treatment technologies
- development of demonstrator project for reuse
- addressing water pricing issues systematically including long and short term externalities
- importance of well developed water markets and water property rights in improving the efficiency of water resource use in Victoria
- adopting product stewardship principles so that users pay for wastewater treatment and treated effluent users pay for distribution
- encouraging and sponsoring community debate and education on water cycle management issues
- community needs to consider the triple bottom line of proposals including the financial impact on the customer
- a major reconfiguration of rural water supply systems, both dams and channels
- Governments becoming an active financial partners in sustainable water use schemes
- Federal policy including taxation and other arrangements to encourage further investment in water industry
- a major infrastructure program to convert open channel irrigation schemes to piped systems financed by "water bonds" that attract superannuation investment
- begin the Wimmera/Mallee pipeline immediately

- strongly supporting integrated water, transport and wholesale infrastructure development in the Geelong corridor to grow new horticultural export markets
- direct support for “smart” irrigation schemes that use targeted water delivery, soil moisture monitoring, scheduling and correct drainage and reuse system
- one stop shop and fast track systems for water conservation developments
- subsidies or other incentives for third pipe systems
- coordination municipal strategic and regional catchment strategies need to be aligned

**The Summit agrees that there would be value in a series of follow-up forums or round tables which focus on:**

- further development of the “Werribee Vision”
- driving water use efficiencies, agriculturally, industrially and domestically
- innovative re-use options for waste water
- sustainable new irrigation opportunities across the state
- models, vehicles and structures for partnerships and collaborations in investments in new water infrastructure
- keeping catchments “healthy” and making sure water use is sustainable

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