



Ballarat City Integrated Water Management Plan: Collaborating to Drive Real Community Outcomes

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At the height of millennium drought, Ballarat was a city in water crisis - with dry lakes, brown recreational areas, dusty sporting grounds, floundering gardens and community event cancellations. It was a city struggling to maintain its basic drinking water needs.

Over the past decade, the planning paradigm has shifted from responsive crisis mode to a systematic planning approach. This evolution of planning maturity initially created a series of collaborative projects and initiatives that alleviated drought impacts and generated support and leverage to create long term plans and build a secure water future. This commitment to strengthening the community through collaboration and sustainable planning has culminated in the community articulating a clear vision for the future and the development of an integrated water management plan for the Ballarat City.

The future of water management must be integrated to be successful; with integrated water cycle planning, collaborative partnerships between stakeholders and a shared community vision guiding investment. Accordingly, the Plan was developed using a highly collaborative approach between Central Highlands Water, City of Ballarat, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and local stakeholders. The plan integrates urban water cycle management with land use and development planning to deliver the community's vision of 'a greener, more liveable and prosperous water future'.

With a commended methodology underpinned by robust analysis of wide-reaching IWM options, ranging from liveability improvements to long-term water service enhancements, the Ballarat IWM Plan demonstrates how a portfolio of projects can be co-delivered by stakeholders to deliver multiple economic, environmental and community benefits.

This leading Victorian project represents a role model and prototype for urban areas generally and regional cities specifically. It delivers tangible community benefits in the short term and guides key strategic water management investment decisions in the future. This paper describes the lessons from the experience and highlights the key processes and approaches that laid the foundations for delivering a plan that supports and creates a more sustainable city. The Plan has been shortlisted for an AWA Program Innovation Award in 2017.