

Minister's Foreword



Waterwatch has played an important role in managing our waterways for over a decade, and the last few years have proved the work of community monitors has never been more critical.

The ongoing drought has illustrated the vital role local communities and volunteers play in helping adapt river and waterway management to changing conditions.

The 2007/08 Waterwatch Yearbook explores this idea of 'change'.

Change has many guises – it may mean the physical changes that have occurred in the landscape; the need for changed practices; or perhaps the change in a community's understanding or actions. The case studies outlined in this yearbook strongly demonstrate Waterwatch's varied approach to education, monitoring and partnerships, and how, through these activities, participants are stepping up to meet the challenges of climate uncertainty.

Volunteers, working in their own 'backyards', have a special connection to their local environment. They can observe changes that are occurring and help identify and put in place practices which adapt to meet changing needs.

Victoria's waterways have been under increasing pressure from drought over the past few years. In many cases, this has served to sharpen people's resolve to protect their local environment.

In some regions, the environment has also been under pressure from major bushfires and floods. Waterwatch groups in these regions have responded by adapting their monitoring programs to collect additional or new information. Groups have conducted bushfire and environmental flows monitoring, and shifted their focus to explore drought conditions in our waterways; expanding their 'monitoring repertoire' to include fish, frogs, platypus and other key species.

I urge Waterwatch schools and groups to continue their monitoring work and encourage others to join them. Monitoring of unexpected short-term changes and changes over long timescales makes a vital contribution to integrated natural resource management in Victoria. Without the effort and commitment of Waterwatch monitors, the task of looking after our waterways would be much harder.

Congratulations and sincere thanks to volunteers for the amazing work they do.

Tim Holding, MP
Minister for Water

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