

minister's foreword



As we enter 2003, the world is recognising the central importance of water to the planet's future with the declaration of the International Year of Freshwater.

Victoria is playing its part in this global setting to recognise and address water resource management and supply challenges. The Government believes Victoria's water assets – our rivers, dams and lakes – are our most valuable natural resource. That is why water has been, and will continue to be, one of our key priorities.

Victoria's Waterwatch program aims to support the involvement of local communities in the management of their waterways. Waterwatch has a strong partnership approach, which links local communities with local governments, regional catchment management authorities and water authorities to build a common understanding of the challenges in managing river health.

The role of the community in waterway management was further strengthened by the launch of the Victorian River Health Strategy in 2002 and we look forward to community involvement in the development of Regional River Health Strategies in 2003. These strategies will be able to take advantage of data collected by school and community groups, at over 2,700 sites in both urban and rural Victoria.

We have also seen an increase in the scientific community's use of community water quality data in 2002. Access to this data has been boosted this year, with the Goulburn Broken catchment data being loaded onto the Victorian Water Quality Data Warehouse. This site, coordinated by the State Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Committee, houses the professionally collected statewide water quality data and is keen to include Waterwatch's community collected data. We look forward to all Victorians having access to community water quality data from across the state in the coming year.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those involved in Waterwatch, in particular, the 17,000 volunteer participants registered in 2002. Your contribution to education and data generation is highly commendable and is another demonstration of how individuals are helping to shape a sustainable future for all Victorians.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Thwaites'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Honourable John Thwaites, MP
Minister for Environment and Water