

## Yarra Valley Water Adaptation Plan Case Study

Yarra Valley Water is a Victorian government agency that is one of the main distributors of water and removal of sewage to Melbourne. They service almost 2 million people and 50,000 businesses. Yarra Valley Water employs over 500 people. (information from Yarra Valley Water's website)

*Plan completed in 2018, will be refreshed in 2021.*

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### Initial Plan Motivation:

The plan was a result of the State's directive to implement climate change adaptation across all aspects of decision making. This was compounded with DEWLP's water sector adaptation plan and the Water for Victoria policy document. These three aspects created the push for the adaptation plan.

**Key stakeholders: DELWP and the Minister (for Energy, Environment and Climate Change)**

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### Defining a Vision, Objective and Goals:

Reading and research are essential. The first process of the plan was to interview key stakeholders within the business to discover how they would be impacted by climate change, and what they wanted to know about climate change and adaptation. This set the context. An external consultancy was hired, they ran a few workshops to build upon the interviews and discover the key risks and potential actions for the organisation. The following workshops brought together key internal stakeholders, fostering a dual approach of learning about the current climate science and identifying the key focus areas of the plan. These were chosen through a vote, and were enhancing adaptive planning, reducing service vulnerabilities and fostering collaborative partnerships. The three key areas were chosen to keep the plan specific and achievable. Further consultations discovered possible actions to address the focus areas. This was signed off by the executive team.

**Key stakeholders: Key internal stakeholders, external consultancy, expert peer reviewers and internal sustainability team/officer**

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### Analysing Multiple Futures:

Considering multiple futures was already part of Yarra Valley Water's planning process so was more easily integrated into the plan. A variety of multiple futures were included, such as climate change futures, customer demand futures, quantity of water reuse futures. The different areas were analysed in consideration to adaptive planning, adaptive governance, scenario analysis and option pathways. The key goal was to increase skills of adaptive planning and to integrate strategic multiple future planning across the organisation.

**Key stakeholders: Internal sustainability team/officer, expert advisory partnerships**

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### **Choosing Priorities and Options for Adaptation:**

The approach taken for choosing priorities was through specificity and focus. The three main areas to consider adaptation options was a manageable number. This involved segregating the adaptation plan to focus on one aspect of the business operations, whether that be environmental sustainability, biodiversity or governance. As the plan is to be refreshed after three years, there is the opportunity to identify new focus areas within that time frame.

**Key stakeholders: Internal sustainability team/officer, business governance operations/strategy, key internal stakeholders**

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### **Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting, Improving and Learning (MERIL):**

The objectives and actions in the plan were being implemented when DELWP released *Managing Climate Change Risk, guidelines for executives and board members within Water Corporations and Catchment Management Authorities* in 2019. An external consultant was hired to assess the climate adaptation plan against the guidelines. The recommendations from this assessment have since been implemented. The company's strategic risk has been upgraded to develop on the existing risk assessment to include cumulative risk, interdependent risk and temporal risk. In addition to the public adaptation plan, there is an internal adaptation plan with key actions, responsibilities for stakeholders, measures, desired outcomes and time frames. This will be formulated into a metrics dashboard for easy access for executives to identify progression in adaptation goals. In regards to learning, there is annual reflection on the progress of the action goals, and every three years before a corporate strategy refresh an independent assessment is held to determine the context and progress on outcomes. Through this learning is integrated into the next adaptation plan and throughout the business.

**Key stakeholders: DELWP, external consultant, key internal stakeholders, internal sustainability team/officer, executives/board**

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**Biggest Challenge:**

Maintaining perseverance would be the biggest challenge, in regards to ensuring that stakeholders that committed to actions deliver. This includes offering to help out where appropriate and necessary to facilitate the achievement of goals. The motivation to deliver the adaptation actions is necessary to ensure that the plan is fully implemented and integrated throughout the business. This is important in ensuring that the adaptation plan actions continue to be implemented when a sustainability officer or key worker leaves a position. Thus the plan can retain its momentum when the previous plan 'champion' is no longer the driver.

**Key stakeholders:** Internal sustainability team/officer, internal key stakeholders

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**Biggest success:**

The biggest success is linked to the challenge, it is that the plan was implemented and used effectively to orchestrate change across the organisation and its practices. Adaptive planning, in particular, has been integrated into business processes and into the culture of the organisation which has improved planning under uncertainty. Furthermore, fostering partnerships with external organisations, such as BOM, has improved the availability of data to base accurate decision making on. This also improves the ability to make proactive opposed to reactive decisions and plans because of the viability of the context that decisions are based on.

**Key stakeholders:** Internal sustainability team/ officer, internal key stakeholders, expert key organisations

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**Key stakeholders:** Internal sustainability team, internal key stakeholders, external consultancy, expert peer reviewers, expert advisory partnerships (e.g Climate Change Exchange), expert key organisations (e.g BOM, CSIRO), water sector organisations, DELWP.

**Key resources:** Collaboration with other organisations in the same sector for joint planning and resilience; relationships with DELWP/state to have input into policy directives to ensure that the context aligns with the aims of delivery, this is aided with regular meetings; aligning adaptation plan or refreshes of adaptation plans with business strategy renewals, prominent new state policy releases, and/or new climate change data releases, this way the plan can integrate relevant data points and contextual policies.

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