



Monitoring and Evaluating Stormwater Targets in the Port Phillip and Westernport Healthy Waterways Strategy

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Biography:

Sharyn has a masters degree in fluvial geomorphology and spent several years at the Cooperative Centre for Catchment Hydrology in the late 1990s as a research assistant, collecting and analyzing waterway and stormwater data. At Melbourne Water Sharyn has had many different roles relating to waterway management from condition monitoring, planning on-ground works and developing new strategies and policies. She was instrumental in setting up Melbourne Waters' Nitrogen Offsets program and the pilot Environmental Significance Overlay over Little Stringybark Creek (part of an innovative stormwater disconnection research project). Sharyn has been heavily involved in the recent Healthy Waterways Strategy refresh and is now developing a Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Plan for the strategy.

Melbourne Water has been working with a range of stakeholders and community groups to refresh the Healthy Waterways Strategy. Over 600 individuals across 220 organisations have helped create the Strategy. Stormwater is seen as one of the biggest threats to our waterways. Accordingly, ambitious 10 year and 50 year targets for harvesting and infiltrating stormwater have been set for new developments. While targets in the strategy exist around water quality, there is already good progress towards meeting best practice for these. Objectives around flows have not been clear and are rarely considered in WSUD projects. Shifting the focus to volumes is a necessary step to address the threats that stormwater poses to the health of our waterways. The strategy identified 16 priority catchments to focus achievement of volume reduction from new developments in the short term and an additional 7 catchments where restoration of flows from existing development is proposed. A monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement plan (MERI) has recently been developed to assess how well the strategy is progressing against set targets. Collating information around stormwater actions and outcomes is challenging and has previously not been undertaken in a coordinated way. There are many stakeholders involved in managing stormwater adding to the complexity of both management and reporting. The Healthy Waterways Strategy MERI outlines the data needed to track performance, the methods for collection, storage and evaluation, and the frequency of reporting. Importantly the process of doing this should illuminate key learnings and allow improvements to be made to facilitate achievement or review of the targets.

Like the development of the HWS, the MERI plan was also developed in a collaborative way. A region wide group of people passionate about waterways was formed including interested individuals and agencies. An independent science panel was also formed to provide scientific rigour to the methods of the MERI plan. A web site will be developed to help disseminate information around tracking progress of the strategy.