

SCIENCE VICTORIA

MEDIA KIT 2023



FEATURES AND ARTICLES

MAXIMISING BENEFITS OF RECYCLED WATER IN THE CLIMATE RISK ERA

By Gordon Hoyle MBE

Victoria can simultaneously solve Melbourne's future sewerage crisis whilst building a sustainable carbon credits sector.

A common sight for Melbourne residents in the 1950s would have been cars full of "nightsoil" heading down Flemington Road to Melbourne, or "smelbourne", as it was known, suburbanly built one of the world's best municipal water systems, supporting the quality of life of residents in the city. Thankfully, we are no longer living in the Victorian era. But our generation has a duty to solve a new set of challenges.

Over the next thirty years and beyond, depending on the actions that are taken to reduce emissions globally, we can expect global temperatures to rise by 1.5°C to 2.0°C.

A key risk facing Victoria is climate change, and we know that Victoria's weather patterns are already changing. According to the Bureau of Meteorology State of Climate 2022 Report, rainfall in the north and west of the continent is above average, whilst rainfall in the southeast during winter months has been very much below average.

Why does this matter? Climate science tells us that the drying of the southeast of the continent is likely to get worse. Over the next thirty years and beyond, depending on the actions that are taken to reduce emissions globally, we can expect global temperatures to rise by 1.5°C to 2.0°C. With these values, it is likely that there are global temperatures with most of the planet covered in water, the actual temperature rises over land masses are likely to be higher than this averaged value. Victoria can expect less rainfall, higher temperatures, and, when rain does come, we are likely to see intense weather events. Recent floods are an indication of what we can expect in the future.

The good news is that Victoria has access to surplus water.

The bad news is that we are quite literally ripping it down the drain.

Currently around 140 billion litres of secondary treated sewage water is discharged into Port Phillip Bay each year. We can expect this volume to grow, given the population in Melbourne's north, west, and inner city will translate into increased flows of Class C recycled water into Port Phillip Bay. It is projected that the north and west of the city alone will grow by 3 million in coming years.

In a climate-risk era, water has increased economic, social, and environmental value. What role can Melbourne's recycled water play in this environment?

One of the key challenges with water is how to shift it from one location where it is not needed, to one where it is needed. The

Swire Mountain Hydro-Electric Scheme demonstrated that from an engineering perspective this can be done. There are already plans to build private lines to transport recycled water to Melbourne's southeast which will support the future sustainability of Melbourne's golf courses. How can we scale this? And, most importantly, who pays?

Carbon credits may provide an avenue for funding.

It is worth noting from the outset that carbon credits are not a long-term solution to addressing climate change, but they play a part in Australia's transition to net zero emissions. The passage of the Safeguard Mechanism legislation by the Australian Government will support the development of carbon credit markets.

A key issue with carbon credits has been their integrity. There are some positive signs that a foundation for quality carbon credits is now being built. On the 7th of March 2023, the Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market (ICVCM) launched its Core Carbon Principles. ICVCM is part of a suite of regulatory measures that have been drawn by Mark Carney, former Governor of the Bank of England, who is the UK's Special Envoy on Climate Action and Finance.

ICVCM's Core Carbon Principles aim to become the gold standard for carbon credits. It is likely that over time they will become the only standard. Voluntary carbon credits that do not align to global standards of integrity are not likely to be supported by financial system regulators.

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Core Carbon Principles, combined with the Safeguard Mechanism, will create the environment that will support investment. Where will this investment flow?

It is likely that, as it currently stands, demand for carbon credits will flow into plantations on equally arid land. From a Victorian perspective, the development of carbon credit projects needs to acknowledge the science of climate change, in particular the drying of the southeast of the continent, as identified by the Bureau of Meteorology, raises the question on whether plantations will survive in times of water and heat stress.

This is where there is an opportunity for Melbourne's surplus Class C recycled water. Thanks to the Victorian Desalination

Source: Victoria, May 2022 21

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Source: Victoria, May 2022, and copyright

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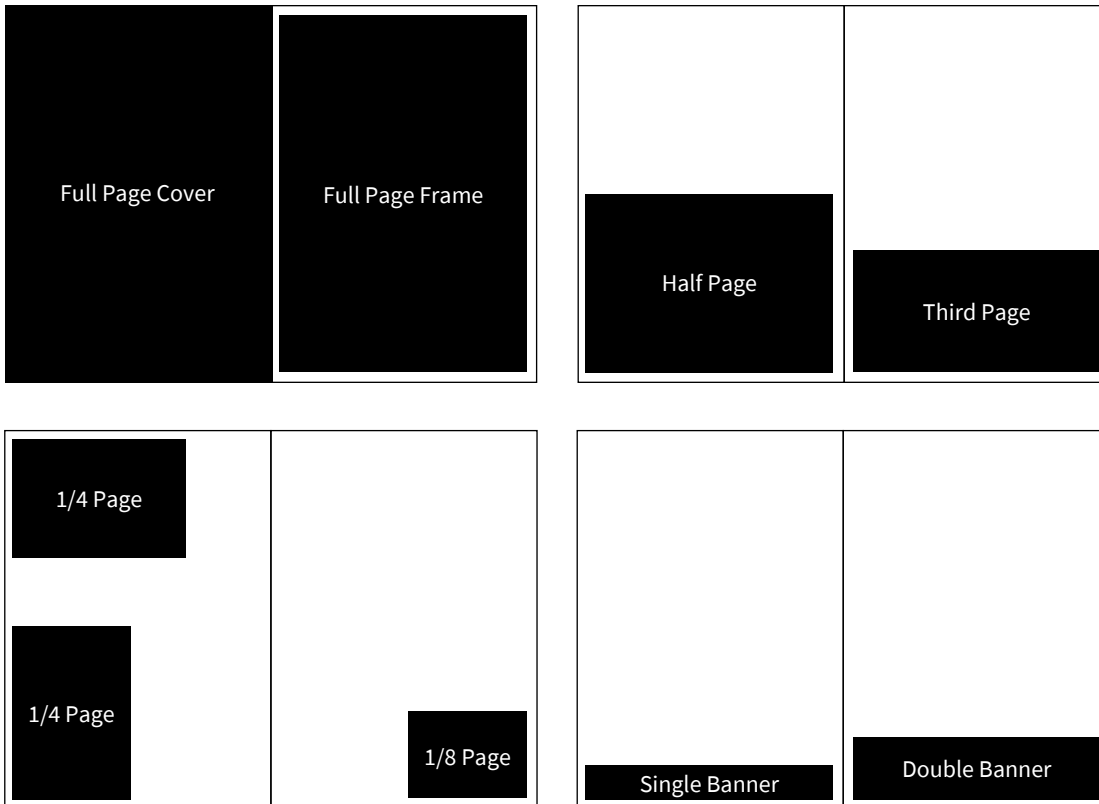
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