



We Are Not Alone: Creating content for non-water practitioners of IWM

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Overview

If we are going to “work together” to “build tomorrow” as this conference implies, we as water practitioners need to recognise that we are not alone out there. We too often ignore important local government partners in planning, landscape architecture, community development, and other sciences; or we leave the engagement too late. Even when we know we should do it, we put interdisciplinarity in the “Too Hard” basket.

Once we do engage, one of the main problems is getting participation and traction from often time-poor professionals with competing demands. We need to help them realise that we are actually all pushing toward similar goals rather than pulling in a different direction. IWM is already well aligned with their drivers and deliverables – we just haven’t been very good at saying so.

To bridge this important gap and bring along all the professionals that have a stake in making IWM work, Foundry worked with Clearwater to prepare strategic engagement materials to support the delivery of the upcoming regional IWM Forums and their broader regional program for IWM.

The materials are meant to answer the question- what is water’s role in delivering integrated objectives that other practitioners care about?

Water can provide several benefits to communities beyond normal water supply and wastewater services, such as;

- Green and cool streetscapes
- Healthy waterways and habitat
- Water for sport and recreation
- Affordability of water and goods
- Multipurpose assets
- Supply security
- Engaging places for community connection

Demonstrating our connection to these outcomes helps get results.

Objectives

The primary objective was to develop five compact, rich and impactful factsheets designed to empower regional champions to answer the “why?” questions around integrated water management with their stakeholders, to increase support for action. The infographic factsheets identified the five primary opportunities that IWM can provide:

- Climate resilience
- Economic opportunities
- Healthy outcomes
- Healthy environments
- Vibrant centres

The factsheets have two specific audiences: a primary audience which includes IWM practitioners (within water corporations, local government, catchment management authorities) who can present the material to the secondary audience whose buy-in is critical, such as decision-makers outside the water industry.

Method

This project was delivered through a series of workshops, curation of relevant stories and effective graphic design. Initially, a workshop was held to establish topics and themes for the factsheets, drawing on Clearwater's industry knowledge to identify the audience and key issues in the industry.

The knowledge gathered from the primary workshop, coupled with a review of existing IWM information and research into industry best practice, provided the material for the (secondary) refinement workshop. The purpose of this workshop was to refine and validate key messages and case studies for each of the factsheets. The messaging was developed to align with the political, social, and institutional context for each case study (based on the research). Following this refinement stage, stories were carefully selected and curated to illuminate the key aspects from a humanistic perspective. These were coupled with vivid infographics to create five four-page impactful factsheets.

Results

The final infographic factsheets tell the story of water's role in climate resilience, healthy communities, economic opportunities, healthy environments, and vibrant centres, and provides clear direction as to why water is important for integrated planning from each of these perspectives. Below is the front page for the climate resilience resource (one of four pages) presenting the factsheet layout.

These resources have been distributed at Clearwater regional IWM Forums, Municipal Association of Victoria IWM training workshops, and shared at various IWM events across the country. They have acted as valuable conversation starters that bring water's role to the forefront of the discussion and have provided inspiration for cross-industry collaboration opportunities.

Conclusions

The factsheets provide a vivid and engaging way to communicate subtle and complex interactions between the water industry and other sectors which are often overlooked at critical planning stages. They strengthen the critical link between people who do not normally consider themselves as active role players in the water sphere by providing answers to the loaded question of why water is relevant to everyone.

These factsheets bring water's role to the forefront of early stage planning discussions and provide a platform to facilitate cross-industry collaboration and bridge existing implementation gaps.