

AUSTRALIAN WATER

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MEDIA RELEASE

Water professionals to gather at Tasmania's Where the Waters Meet Conference

14 August 2018

The Australian Water Association's Tasmanian Branch is about to host their annual conference, Where the Waters Meet, this Thursday, 16 August at the Wrest Point Convention Centre in Sandy Bay.

The theme for this year's conference is "Shaping the Future of Water Business" and will see over 20 presentations from local and national water sector experts.

Campbell Newman, director of Arcana Capital and keynote speaker at this Thursday's conference will discuss the next agricultural revolution: how robotics will help us feed our growing population.

"There's a wave of technical disruption and change that's coming to agriculture that will see us meet the challenge of feeding a growing population across the globe," he said.

Using robotics and AI in agriculture comes with "all sorts of promises", he said, largely due to their targeted nature.

"In terms of the use of irrigation water, the deployment of agricultural robots will take us to a situation where we dramatically reduce the amount of water. You're deploying water exactly where it's required to the root system and you're only using the right amount of water."

Virtual reality is another technology set to disrupt the water industry as David Kirby, water and environment manager with KBR and immediate past president of the Victorian branch of the Australian Water Association will discuss on Thursday.

"It's previously been cost prohibitive for the water industry, but it's now come to a price point where it's affordable for most water industry projects," he said.

VR technology has the potential to reshape many aspects of water industry capital projects, including improving safety and engineering outcomes.

"When you have the goggles on and you're fully immersed in the structure, you could walk around and look for trip hazards or maintenance access. You can look at it from a cost perspective. You can look at it from a sustainability perspective," Kirby said.

The water industry is in a unique position to help improve not just the physical health and wellbeing of its people and the communities it serves, but also their social wellbeing.

Ciara Sterling, head of community inclusion at Yarra Valley Water, and winner of the Australian Water Association's National Water Professional of the Year Award 2018 will discuss how the water industry is embracing customer-centric design and seeing the value of involving communities in the work they do.

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Sterling attributes much of the success of Yarra Valley Water's community engagement initiatives to forming strong partnerships with other frontline services to give a more holistic view of what the community's needs are.

"We make sure we do focus groups, to actually listen to customers and speak with them about what they need. I think one of the greatest gifts we have is to sit and speak with our customers, listen to what their pain points are, and we need to be constantly thinking about how we address those and then design services to meet those needs," she said.

"We've always been heavily connected to our communities, and that makes us the perfect group to start these important conversations. We are about sustainability, about health and wellbeing, and the water industry is being really innovative in this space."

Campbell Newman, David Kirby and Ciara Sterling will all be speaking at Where the Waters Meet this Thursday, 16 August, taking place at the Wrest Point Convention Centre in Hobart.

The Tasmanian Branch would like to thank its sponsors for their support of this conference.



For media enquiries, please contact:

Natasha Stapleton
Tasmanian State Manager
Australian Water Association
P: 0438 246 400
E: nstapleton@awa.asn.au

About the Australian Water Association

With a membership of over 5,000 individual and corporate members, the Australian Water Association is Australia's biggest water network promoting sustainable water management and connecting members through information, networking and recognition.

www.awa.asn.au