

KELLEHERS AUSTRALIA

In-House Memorandum

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Kellehers Australia Water Law Trip

As the sun rose on the Alpine peaks, searing rays of heat spread slowly across the backs of giant ranges, melting the previous night's frosts and moistening the earth with fresh dew. Across this soft soil, small montane rivulets trickle their clear, clean water slowly downstream on its gravity-fed way to the valleys and the creeks and streams that feed the lakes and reservoirs for electricity.

The Kellehers Australia team is on the second of its Water Resource Excursions, aimed at gaining a more practical knowledge of how Victoria's water is managed. Following on from our tour of the Goulburn-Broken catchment in November 2014, this tour saw the team exploring Victoria's beautiful, and critically important Alpine region.

Throughout the course of our weekend, our team covered some 800 kilometres of North-East Victoria, all the while canvassing a range of different perspectives on how to best manage, utilise and optimise this all important resource.

Travelling east from Wangaratta through the Ovens Valley to Mount Beauty, we examined the Kiewa River and the AGL Hydroelectric plant before travelling across the Victorian High Plains south of Falls Creek into the Mitta Mitta Valley. It was following the course of the Mitta Mitta that we met with representatives from Goulburn Murray Water at the Dartmouth Dam and NSW Water at the Hume Dam.

In addition to providing around 43% of the total Murray river flows, surface water in this region of Victoria is responsible for powering hydroelectricity plants that feed the National Energy grid, guaranteeing stable riparian flows for downstream users and ensuring that end-users in South Australia have adequate water resources to supply their needs.

As they interrupt and impound the natural flow of water throughout the watershed, managing the environmental impact of dams is a challenging task. Dams have the potential to affect many aspects of river health and ecology both upstream and downstream. Although dams provide substantial social benefits (e.g. drinking water, hydroelectric power, irrigation water supply, recreation), they have the potential to impose adverse impacts on their environment. These effects must be carefully managed.

Cameron Algie
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KELLEHERS AUSTRALIA: www.kellehers.com.au / e: kelllegal@kellehers.com.au

497 Swan Street, Burnley, 3121, Victoria, Australia