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MEDIA RELEASE

VIC River chosen as example of best practice in global report

The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA), which generates almost a fifth of Victoria's water supply, has been singled out by a global report on restoring rivers for being effective in its planning, evaluation and monitoring programs.

River Heroes - Lessons from Thies Riverprize winners and finalists 1999 - 2006 will be launched by the International Riverfoundation (IRF) on Tuesday 4 September at the 10th International Riversymposium & Environmental Flows Conference in Brisbane.

The report showcases the extraordinary efforts of people to save rivers in Australia and around the world, featuring 13 case studies, including Goulburn Broken Catchment from Victoria, of National and International Thies Riverprize winners and finalists and the lessons learnt from their best practice.

International Riverfoundation Chair, Martin Albrecht, said Victoria should be proud to have such forward-thinking people who acted before crisis point to save its waterways and whose project will serve as a model for global best practice in river management.

"The River Heroes report groups the case studies into categories and identifies five key elements which are essential for best practice river management: partnerships and collaboration; community mobilisation; a holistic approach; planning, evaluation and monitoring; and an emphasis on long-term sustainability", Mr Albrecht said.

"The Goulburn project demonstrates these elements and is to be especially recognised as an excellent collaborative and community-focused venture."

The Goulburn Broken Catchment Project in Victoria won the National Thies Riverprize in 2001 and was chosen for the report because it demonstrates the successful outcomes of planning, monitoring and evaluation initiatives and collaboration of community participation and partnerships.

In 1997, degradation of Victoria's rivers, water quality and native vegetation, topped with dry-land and irrigated salinity issues prompted the establishment of the GBCMA.

The Authority partnered with landholders, landcare groups, research organisations, state and federal government bodies and the wider community to raise funds towards management and restoration projects for the river.

The strategies implemented have already achieved significant improvements in water quality and river health. Nutrient and salt export from the catchment into the broader Murray-Darling system has reduced significantly, and measures established to control salinity are achieving significant irrigation water use efficiencies. Further, primary surface water management schemes and installation of water reuse systems have increased.

River Heroes - Lessons from Thies Riverprize winners and finalists 1999 – 2006 concludes by detailing urgent future actions to ensure the health and sustainability of our river systems.

"We need to introduce a progressive, stepped change within governments and societies that leads us from 200 years of taking rivers for granted and competing for rivers' resources, to developing a new relationship towards rivers and effective agreements and processes for natural resource use", the report states.

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Martin Albrecht said for better or worse the urgent issues of water scarcity and climate change are pushing us to rethink how we can ensure a habitable planet for future generations.

“Now more than ever before it is imperative to promote and reward projects that improve river health which is why IRF is proud to fund the National and International Thies Riverprizes”, he said.

The IRF report will be available for download from 4th September at www.riverfoundation.org.au.

The National and International Thies Riverprizes, which reward groundbreaking river management projects from a prize pool of AU\$400,000, are a partnership between the International Riverfoundation (IRF) and *Riverfestival*, an annual 10 day celebration of Brisbane’s river, people, culture and environment. The prize money is funded by the IRF and the awards are managed by *Riverfestival*.

The 2007 winners will be announced at a gala event on the evening of Tuesday 4 September, after the launch of the River Heroes report.

The IRF is a leading advocate and catalyst for the protection and restoration of the world’s rivers. Initiated by *Riverfestival*, it was established in 2003 as an independent not-for-profit organisation in response to the critical state of many of the world’s rivers.

The 10th International Riversymposium & Environmental Flows Conference is part of *Riverfestival*.

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Or visit www.riversymposium.com for more information on keynote speakers, discussion topics and programming schedule.