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MEDIA RELEASE

Water utilities should lead on climate change

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Water utilities can help achieve Australia's climate targets and the global Sustainable Development Goals, says ClimateWorks Australia Chair John Thwaites.

Thwaites, one of Australia's leading authorities on sustainability, and former Victorian Minister for Climate Change, will be presenting a keynote address for [Ozwater'16](#), the southern hemisphere's largest gathering of water professionals, along with more than 200 other water sector thought leaders.

Thwaites said Australia's water authorities are responsible for substantial greenhouse gas emissions and will need to rapidly reduce these emissions if Australia is to play its proper role in limiting global warming to less than two degrees.

"Water authorities should aim to be carbon neutral as soon as possible," Thwaites said.

"Water authorities need to be much more energy efficient as well as using renewable energy to power their operations. Water authorities can expand their use of mini-hydro schemes, waste to energy and renewables like wind and solar.

"Unfortunately climate policy in Australia has been all over the place and this has led many water authorities to halt the action that is needed. However the water industry has a broader role in securing sustainable development and a better quality of life beyond climate action.

"At the United Nations in New York, more than 150 countries recently agreed to implement a set of seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) between now and 2030. These goals include sustainable management of water and sanitation, sustainable cities, protecting the oceans and biodiversity and important social objectives like better health and gender equality.

"The water industry is in a unique position to achieve many of these goals. Good water management can help deliver jobs and sustainable industries. But it is also vital for liveable and sustainable cities.

"Water sensitive cities planning can help deliver healthier cities for people and for the environment. For example using stormwater to promote additional tree canopy cover can reduce urban heat and the risk of heat stress," Thwaites said.

Australian Water Association CEO Jonathan McKeown said Ozwater was a great opportunity for the Australian water sector to come together to trade insights and innovations.

"Australia's future prosperity is inextricably tied to how well we manage our vital water resources, not only in how we use it but also how we plan for climate and rainfall variability.

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If we are to confront the challenges of the coming years most effectively, a nationally co-ordinated approach is essential,” McKeown said.

“Australia’s water challenges and successes mean our expertise in this sector is renowned the world over and Ozwater will bring together leading minds to discuss how the water sector will ensure Australia continues to thrive.”

Thwaites was Deputy Premier of Victoria from 1999 to 2007, during which time he was Minister for Health, Minister for Planning, Minister for Environment, Minister for Water, and Victoria’s first Minister for Climate Change. In 2012, Thwaites was named one of the top 100 Global Sustainability Leaders by ABC Carbon and Sustainability Showcase Asia.

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To arrange an interview with Thwaites, McKeown or any other Ozwater’16 speaker, contact Australian Water Association Communications Manager Ashleigh James 0488 160 277.

[Ozwater](#) is the southern hemisphere’s largest annual gathering of water professionals. More than 3000 delegates will attend this year’s event, held in Melbourne from May 10–12, to hear from more than 200 expert speakers from Australia and abroad. The convention’s theme is Water: For Liveable Communities and Sustainable Industries.

The Australian Water Association) is an independent, not-for-profit association for water professionals and organisations, providing leadership in the water sector through collaboration, advocacy and professional development. As Australia’s peak water industry body, the Australian Water Association has the largest broadly based membership, with approximately 700 corporate members and 5,000 individual members representing the diversity and breadth of the Australian water industry.