

NEW RESEARCH NODE to Contribute to 'Water-Sensitive' Future



Lani van Vuuren

Lani van Vuuren attended the launch of the IWC Africa Water Research Node at Monash South Africa in Johannesburg, which hopes to contribute to the country's key water resource management challenges through scientific research and education.

The Water Research Node (WRN) enjoys support from both Australia's Monash University and the International WaterCentre, a private sector organisation focused on education, research and consultancy to build capacity in integrated water management. Headed by Director Dr Dirk Roux the WRN hopes to contribute much-needed research capacity to the critical area of sustainable development, wise governance and effective management of fresh water.

"National and catchment-based assessments indicate that freshwater ecosystems are more threatened than marine and terrestrial ecosystems and that, in general, their state is declining further. At the same time we need more water for a growing population, social upliftment and economic development," Dr Roux tells *the Water Wheel*. "The vision of the WRN is to be a leading research and education unit for building capacity to facilitate a transition towards a 'water-sensitive' future."


The WRN hopes to contribute in three ways, firstly, through research, by promoting and facilitating novel, interdisciplinary and use-inspired research. Secondly, through education,

by inspiring post-graduate students to become thought and action leaders in the water sector. Lastly, through community engagement, by co-learning and co-creating solutions with appropriate segments of society that promote adoption of new knowledge and influence change towards more sustainable pathways in water resource management.

The WRN does not aim to compete against existing South African water research centres. In fact, several organisations have already expressed their willingness to cooperate with the node and a number of collaborative projects are being initiated at present.

"Within the global scientific enterprise, no individual or organisation can claim complete ownership of any field of study. In the long term, success in research depends on effective participation in the broader learning system," notes Dr Roux. "The new WRN represents a portal to the substantial knowledge resources of at least two world-class organisations that are both keen to grow their contributions in Africa."

While the funds for research originate in Australia, the WRN is clear on its Africa focus. Monash South Africa is explicit

about its intention to focus its research on issues of concern in contemporary Africa. Similarly, the IWC aims to align its research with the needs of developing countries and to have a measurable impact towards better management of water. "We believe that local relevance and international recognition are not mutually exclusive but complementary outcomes of research," concludes Dr Roux. 



Monash South Africa

At the launch of the IWC South Africa Water Research Node are Dr Dirk Roux, Director: Water Research Node; Mark Pascoe, Chief Executive: International WaterCentre; Prof Dina Burger, Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research; and Prof Tyrone Pretorius, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Monash South Africa.