

Town Water Risk Reduction Program—Outcomes and action items

Meeting 19 | 24 August 2022, 9:30 – 11:30 am

Attendees

Table 1. Attendees.

Invitees	Guests	Others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clr Bill West, Local Government NSW • Mr Graham Kennett, Kyogle Council • • Mr Aaron Drenovski, Goldenfields Water • Dr Annalisa Contos, Atom Consulting • Mr Brendan Guiney, NSW Water Directorate • Ms Jenny Bennett Central NSW JO • Mr Peter Marczan, Manager Technical Assessments & Advice, Environment Protection Authority • Mr Michael Blackmore, Director Local Water Utilities, DPE – Water • Ms Erin Cini – Director Town Water Risk Reduction Program (Chair) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Carmel Krogh, Independent Advisor to DPE Water • Mr Shaun McBride, Local Government NSW • Mr Patrick Lee, Local Government NSW • Ms Amanda Chadwick, Executive Director Performance, DPE Water (items 1-6; items 9-11) • Ms Chen Chou, Director Water Reform Implementation Strategy, DPE – Water (from Item 8) • Mr Graham Attenborough, Chief Operating Officer, DPE Water (until item 4) • Ms Jane Shepherd, Local Water Utilities, DPE Water • Mr Nicholas Sutton, Principal Project Officer, DPE Water 	<p>Town Water Risk Reduction Program team members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Josh Tickell • Mr Glen Colley • Mr Sascha Moege • Dr Nanda Altavilla, • Ms Althea Kannane • Mr Andrew Fraser • Ms Sonya Cochrane (Secretariat)

Apologies

- Mr David Kirby, Brewarrina Shire Council
- Dr Katrina Wall, NSW Health Water Unit
- Ms Melissa Gibbs, Office of Local Government

Outcomes

Table 2. Agenda items and outcomes

Agenda item	Outcomes
1	Acknowledgement of country and meeting welcome
2	<p>Administrative matters</p> <p>Declarations of conflicts of interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clr Bill West – Cowra Shire Council – TWRRP IWCM Pilot • Dr Annalisa Contos – Atom Consulting – Griffith City Council IWCM pilot, Incident and emergency management project; Strategic planning guidance for understanding other key risks and challenges • Ms Jenny Bennett – Central NSW JO – Regional approach to local water utility through IP&R
3	<p>Outcomes/actions from the previous meeting</p> <p>The Panel received an update from the TWRRP team on the outcomes and actions from the previous meeting. No items are outstanding.</p>
4	<p>New structure of Water Operations</p> <p>Chief Operating Officer, DPE Water, provided an update on the new structure of the Local Water Utilities Branch and Urban Water Strategy, Policy and Programs Branch, in the Operations Division.</p> <p>Mr Michael Blackmore, Director Local Water Utilities, will be taking 9 months paternity leave from 5 September and will be absent from the remainder of Panel meetings. Michael’s extensive contribution to the Town Water Risk Reduction Program was recognised. Ms Jane Shepherd will be the Acting Director and was introduced to Panel members.</p> <p>GUIDANCE</p> <p>Panel members asked what assurance and support might look like from the department’s perspective and its involvement in future engagement and projects initiated by the department or stakeholders, in particular piloting of local water utility strategic planning using the integrated planning and reporting framework. The Chief Operating Officer explained the Town Water Risk Reduction Program remains responsible for those pilots integrating for the life of the Program (to December 2022), when it will become the responsibility of the Regulatory Assessments team and the Policy team within Local Water Utilities Branch.</p> <p>A Panel member asked who in the DPE Water would be responsible for implementing the actions of Regional Water Strategies. The Director Local Water Utilities explained that the responsible DPE Water team would implement the relevant action.</p> <p>A Panel member asked why the Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program was being transferred to Urban Water Strategy, Policy and Programs Branch (from the Local Water Utilities Branch). Noting there had been a significant improvement in outcomes for Aboriginal communities since the Program has been managed in conjunction with local water utilities staff and raising concerns about the risk to its ongoing success from the</p>

Agenda item	Outcomes
	<p>change. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Urban Water Strategy, Policy and Programs Branch will have a state-wide focus, rather than metro, and will have oversight of all programs. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Program remains under his leadership and that Water and Sewerage Officers in the Local Water Utilities Branch will continue to support the Program. The Chief Operating Officer requested that if issues affecting Program outcomes are identified they be raised brought to his attention.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Regional collaboration pilots - update</p> <p>Updates were given on 5 regional collaboration pilots testing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional collaboration asset management and trade waste management involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Namoi JO - Gunnedah, Gwydir Liverpool Plains, Tamworth, Walcha and Warrumbungle Councils ○ Kempsey, Mid-Coast, Nambucca and Port Macquarie Hastings Councils • Canberra Region Joint Organisation – Water Utility Working Group (TWRRP providing support). • Regional approach to workforce planning, and operator competency and training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Orana Water Utilities Alliance - Bogan Shire, Bourke Shire, Brewarrina Shire, Central Darling Shire, Cobar Shire, Coonamble Shire, Gilgandra Shire, Mid-Western Regional Council, Narromine Shire, Walgett Shire, Warren Shire and Warrumbungle Shire Councils. • Remote technology support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bourke and Cobar Shire Councils. <p>GUIDANCE:</p> <p>A Panel member asked if the testing approaches to regional collaboration could be applied across the state. The Program team advised that the evaluation of the pilots would identify successes and challenges that could be used to inform further collaborative approaches.</p> <p>A Panel member asked if the piloted trade waste management approach could be run in other regions. The Program Team advised that this will be considered following the evaluation process. However, early indications from the lead council in the pilot suggest that resourcing for smaller councils may be a major barrier to implementing the fee for service approach proposed in the pilot business case.</p> <p>Panel members supported the release of information about the pilots, including successes and challenges, to support informed decision-making by all local water utilities. The Director Town Water Risk Reduction Program confirmed the intention to publish information about the pilots after they are complete and have been evaluated.</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Regulator collaboration framework</p> <p>An update was provided on the endorsed Local Water Utilities Regulators Collaboration Framework. The Department of Planning and Environment will take the lead as the coordinator and will be the first point of contact. The department will coordinate regular regulator meetings, centrally and regionally.</p>

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	<p>The Local Water Utility Regulators Collaboration Framework is available on the Department website: https://water.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/524076/local-water-utility-regulators-collaboration-framework.pdf</p> <p>GUIDANCE:</p> <p>Central NSW Joint Organisation expressed interest in running a pilot proposed by the regulators and a Panel member asked how the regulators' time can be used most effectively and what other opportunities there are to be involved. It was advised that there has already been some discussion on a suitable host for the pilot but there will be other opportunities for involvement.</p>
7	<p>Regulator perception survey results</p> <p>An update was provided on the third regulator perception survey. The results were generally positive and a marked improvement from June 2021, however, the number of responses decreased from previous surveys. The surveys are six-monthly, and the next survey will be held in December 2022. Departmental staff who specialise in engagement are helping to identify strategies to improve the response rate. Panel members were also asked to promote participation within the sector.</p> <p>The results will be in the next newsletter and are published on the website.</p> <p>GUIDANCE</p> <p>A Panel member asked if targets were set prior to starting the survey. It was confirmed they were not, as the initial surveys were intended to establish a baseline, targets will be considered in the future, including in the context of the Quality Assurance framework.</p> <p>A Panel member noted the reduction in numbers needs to be considered in terms of the analysis and also noted it takes time for responses to situations or events to flow through into feedback.</p>
8	<p>Skills and training – update</p> <p>An update was provided on the proposed 2-year skills and training action plan for NSW to address challenges arising from the thin market for water industry operators.</p> <p>GUIDANCE</p> <p>A Panel member noted physical access to training in regions has been a long-term and significant concern and suggested the skills and training action plan address the need for local regional training (that is, without significant travel).</p> <p>In response to a question about the existing draft skills and training action plan, the TWRRP Project team confirmed that in the draft skills and training action plan was endorsed by Ministers in December 2021 and was at that time published on the TWRRP website.</p> <p>The Director Town Water Risk Reduction Program advised that the skills and training action plan pulls on all the levers available to make it happen.</p> <p>ACTION 19.1</p> <p>Panel members to be invited to the next Focus Group meeting on skills and training</p>

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	<p>Stage 1 alternative funding models - update</p> <p>An update was provided on Frontier Economics progress on the report following feedback from Panel members.</p> <p>Key areas being addressed in response to the Panel's feedback include clearly articulating the limitations of the data, providing more explanation around the data sources and analysis, and any limitations to delivery of service levels and cost recovery. Limitations will be considered in stage 2.</p>
9	<p>Other matters raised by Panel members</p> <p>Panel members were reminded to provide feedback on the draft Town Water Risk Reduction Program evaluation report, emailed Monday 22 August to Panel members, by Friday 26 August.</p> <p>ACTION 19.2</p> <p>Panel members to provide feedback on the draft Town Water Risk Reduction Program evaluation report by COB Friday 26 August to Glen Colley.</p>
10	<p>Next meeting and close</p> <p>The next Panel Meeting is 28 September 2022, and will include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IWCM and IP&R pilots • Transition from IWCM to IPR • Gaps in legislation • Pricing guidelines

Actions arising from 24 August 2022 meeting

Table 3. Summary of actions.

No	Action	Responsibility	Due date
19.1	Panel members to confirm with Nanda Altavilla if they want to be invited to the next Focus Group meeting on skills and training	Panel members	31 August 2022
19.2	Panel members provide feedback on the draft Town Water Risk Reduction Program evaluation report to glen.colley@dpie.nsw.gov.au	Panel members	26 August 2022

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