

Town Water Risk Reduction Program—Outcomes and action items

Meeting 20 | 21 September 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 (from item 4 onwards) • Mr Graham Kennett, Kyogle Council • Ms Meredith MacPherson, Central NSW JO. • Mr Aaron Drenovski, Goldenfields Water (until item 5) • Mr Brendan Guiney, NSW Water Directorate • 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"> • Jim Bentley, CEO NSW Water Sector, DPE Water (until item 7). • Ms Carmel Krogh, Independent Advisor to DPE Water (from item 6 onwards). • Mr Shaun McBride, Local Government NSW • Mr Patrick Lee, Local Government NSW • Dr Paul Byleveld, NSW Health Water Unit. • Ms Amanda Chadwick, , DPE Water. • Mr Graham Attenborough, DPE Water (until item 9) • Mr Dilip Dutta, DPE Water • Ms Fiona Conlon, Coordinator TWRRP Strategic Planning Pilots. • Ms Samantha Russell, DPE Water. 	<p>Town Water Risk Reduction Program team members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Josh Tickell • Mr Glen Colley • Dr Nanda Altavilla, • Ms Althea Kannane • Mr Andrew Fraser

Apologies

- Ms Melissa Gibbs, Office of Local Government
- Ms Jane Shepherd, Local Water Utilities, DPE Water
- Dr Katrina Wall, Water Unit, NSW Health
- Ms Jenny Bennett Central NSW JO
- Dr Annalisa Contos, Atom Consulting

Outcomes

Table 2. Agenda items and outcomes

Agenda item	Outcomes
1	Acknowledgement of country and meeting welcome
2	<p>Safety reflection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Erin Cini reflected on the recent RUOK day and mental health Dr Jim Bentley advised of a recent decision to hold a Water Safety Learning forum once a year with department, State Owned Corporations, Water Infrastructure NSW, local water utilities and consultants.
3	<p>Administrative matters</p> <p>Declarations of conflicts of interest included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clr Bill West – Cowra Shire Council – 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 pilot.
4	<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>
5	<p>Reflections from Jim Bentley</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The outgoing Chief Executive of the NSW Water Sector, Dr Jim Bentley joined the Panel and provided some reflections on the It's not what you do in a drought that matters, it's what you do between droughts. Panel members thanked Dr Bentley for his role in driving the work of the Program noting that the collaborative approach has been excellent and just what the sector needs. Panel members advised of their view that the Program should continue. A Panel member also expressed the view that local government has a role to play in encouraging one another to improve and reduce risk (and working with LGNSW and Water Directorate). Dr Bentley encouraged people to write to him about what will make the next phase of the Program work better so that he could pass this information on to his successor. A Panel member expressed the view that the new CEO of the NSW Water Sector should be presented with the "what we heard from LWUs" slide that Dr Bentley presented to the NSW Water Conference in February 2022.

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6	<p>Dam Safety - update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Glen Colley provided an update on the WaterNSW Dam Safety pilot which has recently evaluated by the Program team, highlighting the positive feedback from participating councils particularly in relation to understanding their risks, how to address these risks and the value of the water utilities building relationships with WaterNSW dam safety experts. A Panel member reaffirmed the view expressed by participating councils that WaterNSW added value for Dams Safety in LWUS and highlighted an opportunity for Water NSW to provide more river data to local water utilities on regulated rivers.
7	<p>Operations update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graham Attenborough provided an update on the activities of the Operations Team in relation to local water utilities. Key issues included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pending advertisement of the Manager Technical Assessment role The commencement of Jane Shepherd as Director Water Utilities, and her plans to meet with local water utilities and other stakeholders. The Data analytics and performance team working out how they can support LWUs. Progress on addressing the \$90m grant funding backlog.
8	<p>Strategic planning pilots – update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Glen Colley and Fiona Conlon presented on the progress of the Program’s strategic planning pilots, noting that many are still be implemented. However, the Program team is in the process of evaluating all the pilots before phase 1 of the Program ends. The Panel was advised that the department has committed to undertaking evaluations of all the pilots to ensure the key learnings are documented and published. This will in turn help inform and improve the implementation of the department’s strategic planning assurance functions under the new Regulatory and Assurance Framework. The Panel discussed the impact of delays to scoping the pilots in relation to what the pilots had ultimately been able to deliver, and noted the Program team’s advice that the evaluations largely focussed on the pilot scoping and implementation process, as opposed to the limited pilot outputs. It was noted that a range of factors impacted on the scoping of pilots, including uncertainty about the commencement of the new Regulatory and assurance framework was a factor that impacted this. A Panel member raised concerns about the barriers some local water utilities are experiencing form the department in relation to progressing strategic planning. Graham Attenborough committed to he and Jane Shepherd meeting with Clr Bill West (and other interested local water utilities) to better understand their specific issues. A Panel member commented that the focus on improving the integration local water utility strategic planning with the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework of the Local Government Act (in line with the Regulatory and Assurance Framework) should be a key focus of the department.

Agenda item	Outcomes
	<p>ACTION</p> <p>Graham Attenborough and Jane Shepherd to meet with Cr Bill West (and other interested local water utilities) to better understand the barriers to progress they are experiencing in relation to strategic planning.</p>
9	<p>Pricing guidelines – update</p> <p>The Program team provided an update on the pricing guidelines, which will be issued as a draft for comment. The Panel will be updated when the document goes up on the website</p> <p>The Panel discussed the existing pricing methodology. A number of members expressed a view that they would like to have more time to consider the proposed approach in more detail before commenting but reiterated previous comments that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the 75/25 rule is too inflexible and compromises financial sustainability • Variable factors should be covered by variable pricing, and fixed factors by fixed pricing. <p>ACTION</p> <p>The Program team to advise the Panel when the draft pricing guidelines are issued. .</p>
10	<p>Incident and emergency management guidance – update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Josh Tickell provided an update to the Panel. Key issues noted included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ After seeing feedback on the draft guidance, the team has decided to commission two further case studies (Dubbo boiled water alert and Tweed flooding). ○ The team will also hold a workshop with everyone who provided feedback to make sure the guidance is useful for utilities. ○ The guidance will be used as a roadmap for the department to provide support to councils.
11	<p>Other matters raised by Panel members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Panel member requested information about whether the Program is likely to continue in some form, and noted that they will be encouraging the Government to continue the Program and are hoping to receive positive advice in the near future. • The Program team noted that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Program evaluation report notes that the sector has expressed a view that the Program continues and recommends that this occurs. ○ the department hopes to be in a position to provide further information in early November.
12	<p>Next meeting and close</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The next Panel Meeting is 26 October 2022, and will include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Update on implementation. ○ Update on Regulatory and Assessment framework guidance (Sascha). • Request for a SSWP update at a future meeting

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Next meeting is the day after the LGNSW conference in Hunter Valley. ● Other impending issues raised for the Panel's noting included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Glen Colley is taking up a role as Manager Regional Water Strategies on 4 October 2022. Erin Cini will take over his areas of responsibility, ○ Nanda Altavilla is going on two months long service leave from 23 September until the end of November. Nanda is handing skills and training to Josh, and other regulatory work to Sascha. ○ The team is also considering an event at the end of the year to mark the end of phase 1 of the Program. Further information will be provided to Panel members when available. .

Actions arising from 21 September 2022 meeting

Table 3. Summary of actions.

No	Action	Responsibility	Due date
20.1	Meet with Cr Bill West (and other interested local water utilities) to better understand the barriers to progress they are experiencing in relation to strategic planning.	Graham Attenborough and Jane Shepherd	December 2022
20.2	Advise the Panel when the draft pricing guidelines are issued.	TWRRP team	October 2022

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