



Water

Town Water Risk Reduction Program

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Welcome to the August edition of the Town Water Risk Reduction Program newsletter.

Co-operation between local water utility regulators



NSW Government regulatory agencies are responsible for overseeing and supporting local water utilities within their own regulatory frameworks. Agencies of the NSW Government work individually and collaboratively in line with the NSW Government sector core values of integrity, trust, service and accountability.

Local water utility regulators are implementing a collaboration framework to support delivery of regulator actions identified in the Department's [Roadmap to an improved regulatory framework for local water utilities](#) (actions 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8). The [collaboration framework](#) was developed by the following NSW Government regulatory agencies, collectively referred to as the local water utility regulators:

- Department of Planning and Environment — Water
- NSW Health
- NSW Environment Protection Authority
- Office of Local Government
- Natural Resources Access Regulator
- Dams Safety NSW
- Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of NSW.

We welcome feedback on the way local water utility regulators are working together and with local water utilities. If you have feedback about our approach to communication and coordination or any other aspects of the framework, including any opportunities for improvement, please reach out to the relevant local water utility regulator/s. You can also direct feedback on the collaboration framework to the Town Water Risk Reduction Program at regional.town.water@dpie.nsw.gov.au

Survey results indicate the department's performance is improving



We are committed to continuous monitoring and improvement of the department's performance and processes as a regulator of local water utilities. In June 2021, the department initiated a local water utility sector survey to understand stakeholders' views about how we regulate, support and work in partnership with local water utilities and to identify where we can improve.

The latest [survey results](#) (June 2022) are now available. There was general positivity across all survey responses collected in June 2022, and a marked improvement when compared to June 2021. However, the number of responses were substantially lower than the total collected in June 2021. It is difficult to draw definitive conclusions due to this variability, but there are encouraging signs that the department is building goodwill and trust in the sector.

The department will next repeat the survey in December 2022.

Voices for the bush



Earlier this month, the Voices for the Bush conference was held in Alice Springs, a combined effort between the Australian Water Association and the Water Services Association of Australia. Josh Tickell from the Town Water Risk Reduction Program team joined people from all over Australia to listen and discuss issues related to water supplies in regional Australia.

Josh participated in a panel discussion on the future workforce of regional Australia, with a focus on attracting and retaining skilled workers, training and development, and opportunities for industry collaboration. A strong theme emerged about the benefits of a water utility's connection to its community through a local workforce, and other states highlighted their work targeting increased Aboriginal participation in utility operations. As an outcome of the conference, skills and training were highlighted as one of the five key areas for improved coordination and collaboration across the industry.

AWA State Conference



The 2022 Australian Water Association (AWA) NSW Conference 'Shocks and Disruptions: Operating and Planning in Uncertainty' was recently held in Port Macquarie. In his opening remarks, Jim Bentley, CEO of the NSW Water Sector, highlighted the Town Water Risk Reduction Program and other NSW Government programs that support the sector to build resilience.

Erin Cini from the Town Water Risk Reduction Program shared an update on the program, including the delivery of the [Regulatory and assurance framework for local water utilities](#), regional collaboration and state government support pilots,

and emphasised the long-term importance of implementing the [Water industry skills and training action plan](#) to reduce operational risks.

NSW AWA Branch President, Nanda Altavilla officiated this successful event that brought together over 220 delegates. All delegates embraced the opportunity to reconnect with water colleagues and stakeholders.

We congratulate Nirmal Joy and Rachel Abberton of MidCoast Council for winning the best paper for [From drought response to water resilience: A journey of mindset shift](#).

Watch our councillor video series



Our [councillor video series](#) captures key insights from some of the most experienced Mayors and councillors across regional NSW Council-owned local water utilities. Watch this video to hear from Cr Doug Hawkins, Mayor, Liverpool Plains Shire Council.

Safe and Secure Water Program investing in water security



The Safe and Secure Water Program partners with councils and local water utilities to invest in water infrastructure across regional NSW. These projects help to strengthen and improve our water security.

Recent highlights of the program include:

- The new state-of-the-art Grenfell Sewerage Treatment Plant, which opened in July. The new plant will provide modern wastewater services to Grenfell and surrounds, replacing existing infrastructure that served the community for more than 80 years.
- Works have begun to upgrade the Wauchope Water Treatment Plant. New filtration membranes and a chlorine dosing facility will help filter and treat water, particularly during storms and heavy rainfall, to help safeguard the region's water security.
- The Bathurst Stormwater Harvesting project has awarded the construction tender. The stormwater harvesting scheme will build a 36ML storage pond and 8ML storage pond to capture stormwater run-off from drains and local catchments. Captured water will be treated at the Bathurst water treatment plant to ensure it is safe to use.
- The contract to design the new Bega and Tathra water treatment plant and operations depot has been awarded. The project is a joint initiative to deliver high quality, filtered water and improved water security for the area.

- Funding has also been committed for the concept design of a new water treatment plant for Baradine, and the detailed design of an upgraded sewage treatment system for Gilgandra.

To learn more about these projects and the Safe and Secure Water Program, [please visit our website](#).

Nearly 2 billion litres of water to be saved through leak detection



Leak detection work has wrapped up across 20 regional Local Government Areas and experts have located a staggering 1.85 billion litres of water leaking from network pipes each year.

Staff from the Regional Network Leakage Detection project have been working closely with councils and local water utilities to find leaks. They use high-powered listening devices to pinpoint leaks in pipes, meters, and valves. The leaks produce a unique sound that experts can home in on with specialised high-tech gear.

Once the leaks are identified, it is up to local councils to fix them. This work also enables councils to better manage leaks when they happen in the future.

So far, we've surveyed more than 1400 kilometres of water mains and found more than 850 leaks. A lot of these pipes have already been repaired, saving more than 230 million litres of water per year.

The project is the first stage of the larger Regional Leakage Reduction Program, which aims to save up to 7.5 billion litres of water over the next three years.

Learn more about the [Regional Leakage Reduction Program](#).

Introducing Jane Shepherd



Some staff news with regards to the Water Utilities Team. Michael Blackmore is on paternity leave for 9 months. Jane Shepherd, who is currently the Manager Commercial with Water Infrastructure NSW, will be acting in the role of Director, Local Water Utilities for this time.

Based in Albury, Jane brings extensive water sector experience, including working with North East Water in Victoria in the operational and engineering space, delivering water infrastructure in a regional context and implementing a significant change initiative, whilst enhancing relationships.

Responsible for the Local Water Utilities Team, Jane will work closely with the Town Water Risk Reduction Program team to implement the new regulatory and assurance framework and improve how we support local water utilities, directly or through the Safe and Secure Water Program.

You'll be seeing and hearing from Jane over the coming months and she can be contacted on email jane.shepherd@dpie.nsw.gov.au

Further information and feedback

Visit the [Town Water Risk Reduction Program](#) website for more detailed information.

Have your say

For more information or enquires please email the team at regional.town.water@dpie.nsw.gov.au

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