

Water

Department of Planning and Environment



Local Water Utilities newsletter – July 2023



Key learnings from a year of assessing approvals under the Regulatory and Assurance Framework

This month marks the first anniversary of assessing and approving works under the Regulatory and Assurance Framework.

The processes for application, assessment and coordination with co-regulators on works approvals are now maturing. The greatest challenges experienced with assessments over the last year have been the introduction of health-based targets and the need for local water utilities to consult either NSW Health (for water projects) or the NSW EPA (for sewerage projects) prior to making an application. This affects the department's ability to perform a timely assessment due to the need to consult with our co-regulators.

Local water utilities should work with NSW Health to perform a drinking water safety design assessment prior to submitting an application. Some projects have not considered health-based targets in consultation with NSW Health, leading to reactive design changes to meet required log reduction credits. Guidance is provided in NSW Health's factsheet [Incorporating health-based targets into drinking water management systems and Section 60 approvals](#).

The department's regional staff are also working with local water utilities to increase awareness about recent issues.

Regulators forum to align regulatory processes



The department has established a Local Water Utilities Regulators Coordination Forum. The forum will provide a coordinated approach and improved coordination of high-level strategic regulatory processes across the key NSW agencies which regulate local water utilities: NSW Health, EPA, OLG, NSW Dams and IPART.

The membership represents senior management of those agencies.

The inaugural forum meeting was held on 13 July. The forum will develop and promote options for improving, aligning, and streamlining water utilities' regulatory processes, particularly where regulators' strategic work intersects, overlaps or is changing. While the resolution of operational issues will remain with regional teams, complex issues such as the proposed Tamworth Water Purification Plant would land in the scope of the Regulators Coordination Forum.

The forum contributes to the objectives of Section 10 of the Regulatory and Assurance Framework for Local Water Utilities.

Upcoming webinars to explore key topics



Following the success of our recent roadshow, the department is planning to host a series of webinars to provide information about topics of interest to local water utilities.

Attendees at the roadshow and Local Government NSW Conference suggested a range of subjects they would like presented in a webinar series. We have developed an online survey with these suggestions for local water utility staff to tell us which topics they would be most interested in hearing about.

[Complete the survey.](#)

Closing soon: Regulator perception survey



There are just a few days left for local water utility personnel to anonymously provide feedback about how the department regulates, supports and works in partnership with their utilities.

Every 6 months, we ask you to provide feedback so we can understand your views to identify areas for improvement.

Please take a few minutes to complete our [survey](#) which closes on Monday 31 July 2023, 11.59 PM (AEST).

Namatjira water tanks a work of art



The Murray River community of Namatjira recently held an opening day to celebrate enhanced water security in the far western Murray River community of Namatjira. Festivities included a smoking ceremony, traditional dancing and speeches followed by a BBQ.

Two 255-kilolitre raw water tanks were built last year to improve water reliability for the community, increasing water storage and replacing an old water tower which had reached the end of its design life.

The new tanks also highlight the community's spiritual connection to water. Visible from the nearby Silver City Highway, they provide a canvas for a stunning artwork by Mura/Barkindji artist John Mitchell, depicting his people fishing and living along the riverbank. John worked with community members Lorraine Mitchell and Sharon Kirby to develop the artwork concepts and Zest Events International managed transfer of the concepts as a giant mural onto the water tanks.

Another mural has also been added on the pump station, celebrating local sporting heroes including AFL players Derek Eggmolesse-Smith and James Lawson and jiu-jitsu world champion Shantelle Thompson.

The \$3 million upgrade was led and funded by the department as part of the Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program and collaboratively supported by Dareton

Local Aboriginal Land Council, Wentworth Shire Council, NSW Public Works and contractors.

For more information, visit water.dpie.nsw.gov.au/plans-and-programs/aboriginal-communities-water-and-sewerage-program/completed-projects

Grants boost leak reduction projects



Thirteen regional NSW councils have received NSW Government funding for water efficiency projects as part of the Regional Leakage Reduction Program.

Scattered from Ballina in the north to Bega Valley in the south, and as far west as Cobar and Wentworth, the councils will use the grants for projects which reduce network leakage through capacity building, pressure management, leakage control and metering.

The grants range from \$18,250 to \$150,000, and each council will co-fund their projects.

For more information, visit <https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/regional-leakage-reduction-program-local-water-utility-projects>

Further information

Have your say

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

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