



Water

Town Water Risk Reduction Program

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Communicating with our stakeholders in the lead up to the NSW election in March

In the weeks leading up to the NSW election there are special arrangements in place to ensure the neutrality of the public service.

From 26 January until the end of the formal caretaker period, our primary source of communications will be via our website. Our regular electronic newsletters will cease during this period. Keeping our communities and stakeholders informed is very important to us.

Please look out for emails you may receive from us and also check our website regularly for updates. For any enquiries you can contact us by email:

water.enquiries@dpie.nsw.gov.au or call 1300 081 047 during business hours.

Incident and emergency management framework and guidance now available



In 2022, the department worked in partnership with stakeholders to develop an [incident management framework and guidance](#) to support local water utilities in better managing risks. The framework presents a set of outcomes and actions for local water utilities, drawing on several existing requirements in NSW Government policy and legislation for incident and emergency management. Water utilities are encouraged to use this document as a tool to review existing incident management arrangements, identify gaps and plan for future improvements.

[View the framework and guideline](#)

Update on strategic planning outcomes guidance

The department has now published all 12 guidance documents that cover the strategic planning outcome areas identified in the Regulatory and assurance framework for local water utilities. These are available on the [department's website](#) and cover the following areas:

- [Understanding service needs](#)
- [Understanding water security](#)
- [Understanding water quality](#)
- [Understanding environmental impacts](#)
- [Understanding system capacity, capability and efficiency](#)
- [Understanding other risks and challenges](#)
- [Understanding solutions to deliver services](#)
- [Understanding resourcing needs](#)
- [Understanding revenue sources](#)
- [Make and implement sound strategic decisions](#)
- [Implement sound pricing and prudent financial management guidance](#)
- [Promote integrated water cycle management.](#)

Water industry induction handbook for decision-makers



The [induction handbook](#) is a resource for decision makers operating in a regional Council-owned local water utility, especially for councillors in councils and county councils. The handbook was updated this month to reflect the new Regulatory and assurance framework for local water utilities and is available to view on the [Skills and training page](#). It provides guidance on some of the decisions that councillors

and water managers may be faced with in managing water services and aims to support their understanding.

Phase 2 of the Town Water Risk Reduction Program



Last month the NSW Government announced that it is investing \$32.8 million into a suite of new initiatives to provide greater support for local Councils and Local Water Utilities, known as Phase 2 of the Town Water Risk Reduction Program.

The program will provide continued support to local water utilities and focuses on:

- improving access to skills and training
- incident and emergency management
- optimising water treatment operations
- addressing dam safety and water quality risks by leveraging the systems and expertise of WaterNSW
- investigating regulatory gaps
- continued investigation of alternative funding models.

For more information on Phase 2 of the program, visit: [News and articles](#).

Review of local water utility dividend requirements



The department is [reviewing the eligibility criteria, calculation methods and other requirements](#) ('dividend requirements') that apply to dividend payments by local water utilities under the guidelines of section 4 of the regulatory and assurance framework for local water utilities.

The review will identify opportunities to improve local water utility dividend requirements to ensure they receive an appropriate return on investment, can cover their costs and provide value-for-money services to customers.

We sought sector-wide feedback on the [consultation paper](#) in December 2022. 10 written submissions were received and an online workshop was attended by stakeholders representing Local Government NSW, the Water Directorate, Office of Local Government and the program's focus group.

The feedback received is being considered and a final report will be published on the outcomes of the review and recommended changes to section 4 of the regulatory and assurance framework. The changes are expected to be approved to apply from the 2023/24 financial year.

Vale Bernie Barnes



We are deeply saddened to share that our colleague Bernie Barnes, Senior Water and Sewerage Inspector, passed away just before Christmas after a short illness. Bernie was a valued and highly respected member of the Local Water Utilities team providing operational support, mentoring and advice to water operators and other water professionals in local water utilities for 30 years. We will miss Bernie and our thoughts are with his family.

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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