

## UPDATE: Snowy Water Licence Review Implementation

*Update on the implementation of actions from the Snowy Water Licence Review.*

### Overview

The Snowy Water Licence (the licence) defines Snowy Hydro Limited's rights and obligations in relation to water in the Snowy Mountains Scheme. The licence allows Snowy Hydro Limited to collect, divert, store and release water by and from the works of the Snowy Mountains Scheme.

Under the *Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Act 1997*, the licence is subject to mandatory reviews, initially after five years and then at intervals of 10 years.

In 2017, the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment – Water (the department) initiated the first 10-year review of the licence, focussing on Snowy Hydro Limited's obligations under the licence, which fall into three broad categories:

1. Increased flow requirements in the Snowy River (releases of water for the environment).
2. Water release requirements (predominately releases of water to the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers where it is used for consumptive and environmental uses).
3. Administrative obligations (for example, compliance, annual operating plans, fees and charges).

The review also considered Snowy Hydro Limited's and the Water Administration Ministerial Corporation's performance in meeting the conditions of the licence.

### Outcomes of the final report

The department released its [final report](#) on the 10-year review in December 2018, which identified 23 actions to improve Snowy water management. The key findings of the report include:

- Amendments to administrative obligations in the licence that will increase transparency, strengthen compliance and accountability and simplify provisions to reduce regulatory burden for Snowy Hydro Limited.
- Commitment to investigating licence amendments to improve the delivery of environmental flows, maximise water efficiencies and clarify ambiguous licence provisions.
- Positive response to the recommendations of an independent expert panel review of the performance of both Snowy Hydro and the Water Administration Ministerial Corporation with the licence conditions.

### Implementation

The department is overseeing the implementation of the actions with the support of the NSW Department of Planning Industry and Environment – Environment Energy and Science (DPIE-EES), Snowy Hydro Limited and other state agencies with a direct interest in water regulated and released from the Snowy Mountains Scheme.

### Governance

The department has set-up a governance framework which will ensure the appropriate management and oversight of the licence review implementation (Figure 1).

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The department has established two committees to oversee the implementation and review outcomes of the actions:

- The Snowy Water Government Officials Committee (SWGOC) comprises members from NSW (DPIE-Water), Victoria (DELWP) and the Commonwealth (DAWE) to provide strategic advice and direction for water management in the Snowy River basin and meet agreed outcomes from the Snowy Water Inquiry and preserve the intent of historical water sharing and operating arrangements.
- The Snowy Technical Working Group (TWG) consisting of NSW (DPIE-Water, WaterNSW, and DPIE-EES), Victoria (DELWP), the Commonwealth (DAWE, MDBA) and Snowy Hydro Limited to provide technical input and advice on water release and environmental water delivery investigations.

In addition, the Snowy Advisory Committee (SAC) has been set-up to provide engagement and consultation on environmental water delivery investigations for the Snowy and Snowy montane river systems.

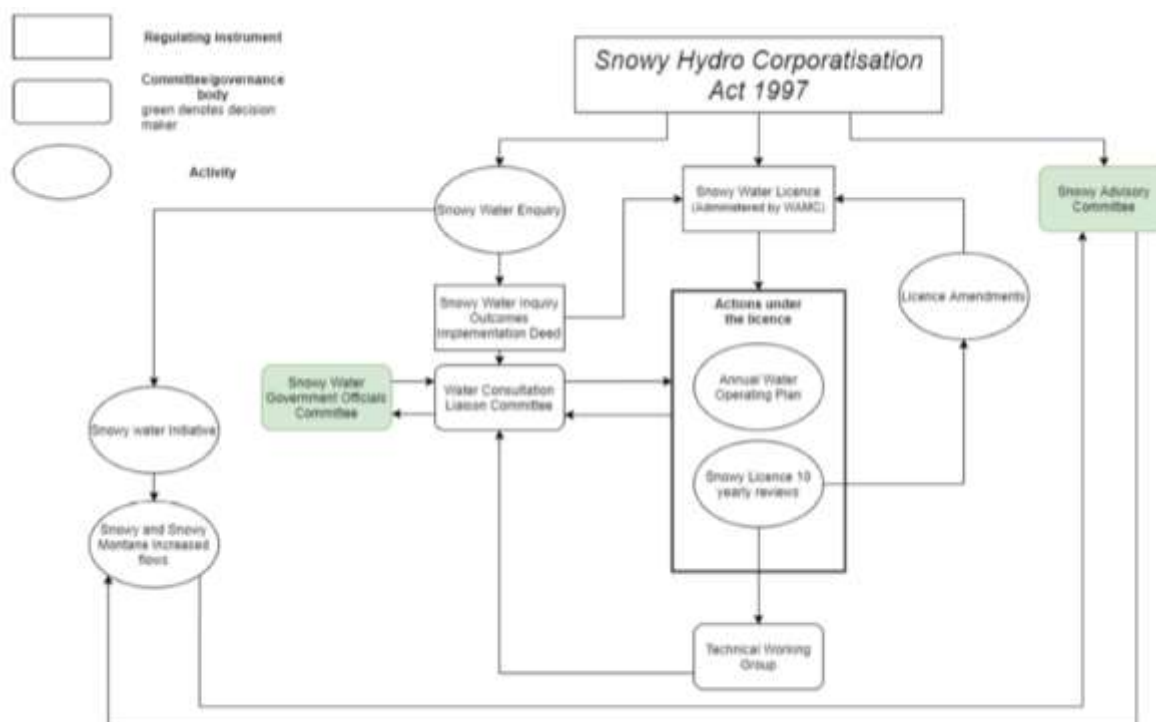


Figure 1: Snowy water licence governance framework

## Progress

The department commenced the implementation of licence review actions in 2019. Progress includes:

- Completion of the administrative amendments to the licence. The revised licence is due to be published in early 2021.
- Commencement of the review of the current processes and protocols to improve licence management, governance and administration, in line with best practice.

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- Handing over administration of environmental water delivery investigations and ongoing management to DPIE-EES.
- Commencing a review of the water release investigations with the support from the TWG.

To date, 10 out of the 23 actions have been completed. The remaining 13 actions are more complex and require detailed analyses to understand the consequences of any change to the licence and to ensure third parties are not inadvertently impacted.

## Timeframes

The department anticipates the review of licence management and the delivery of the commercial Annual Water Operating Plan (AWOP) will be complete by mid-2021.

The remaining actions relating to the environmental water delivery and water release investigations are scheduled for completion by 2022, with the second round of licence amendments scheduled for December 2022.

## Stakeholder engagement

The department is committed to continued engagement and consultation with key stakeholders, including Snowy Hydro Limited, government agencies and committees with a direct interest in water regulated and released from the Snowy Mountains Scheme throughout the review implementation process.

The newly appointed Snowy Advisory Committee will provide expert and community input to the design of environmental flows to the Snowy River and Snowy montane rivers. Community interests will also be represented through existing consultation mechanisms in the southern Murray-Darling Basin.

In addition, the community and special interest groups will be invited to comment on any proposed licence amendments via a public exhibition process, which will be supported by community information sessions.

## Updates

Information on the progress of the licence review will be published on the department's website: [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/basins-catchments/snowy-river/corporate-licence](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/basins-catchments/snowy-river/corporate-licence)

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