

# Town Water Risk Reduction Program—Outcomes and action items

Meeting 21 | 26 October 2022, 9:30 – 11:30 am

## Attendees

**Table 1. Attendees.**

Invitees	Guests	Others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clr Bill West, Local Government NSW</li> <li>• Mr Aaron Drenovski, Goldenfields Water</li> <li>• Mr Brendan Guiney, NSW Water Directorate</li> <li>• Dr Annalisa Contos, Atom Consulting</li> <li>• Ms Meredith MacPherson, Central NSW JO</li> <li>• Dr Paul Byleveld, NSW Health Water Unit</li> <li>• Mr Peter Marczan, Manager Technical Assessments &amp; Advice, Environment Protection Authority</li> <li>• Mr Glenn George, Manager Northern Region, Local Water Utilities, DPE Water</li> <li>• Ms Erin Cini – Director Town Water Risk Reduction Program <b>(Chair)</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ms Carmel Krogh, Independent Advisor to DPE Water</li> <li>• Mr Shaun McBride, Local Government NSW</li> <li>• Mr Patrick Lee, Local Government NSW</li> <li>• Ms Amanda Chadwick, DPE Water</li> <li>• Ms Samantha Russell, DPE Water</li> </ul>	<p>Town Water Risk Reduction Program team members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr Josh Tickell</li> <li>• Mr Sascha Moege</li> <li>• Mr Andrew Fraser</li> </ul>

## Apologies

- Mr Graham Kennett, Kyogle Council
- Mr David Kirby, Brewarrina Shire Council
- Ms Jenny Bennett, Central NSW JO (represented by Ms Meredith MacPherson)
- Ms Melissa Gibbs, Office of Local Government
- Ms Jane Shepherd, Local Water Utilities, DPE Water (represented by Mr Glenn George)

### Outcomes

Table 2. Agenda items and outcomes

Agenda item	Outcomes
1	<b>Acknowledgement of country and meeting welcome</b>
2	<b>Safety reflection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Josh Tickell reflected on the risks of sewage contamination of floodwaters</li> </ul>
3	<b>Administrative matters</b> Declarations of conflicts of interest included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cr Bill West – Cowra Shire Council – IWCM strategy/strategic planning pilot</li> <li>• Dr Annalisa Contos – Atom Consulting – Griffith City Council IWCM strategy/strategic planning pilot, incident and emergency management project; Strategic planning guidance for understanding other key risks and challenges</li> <li>• Ms Meredith Macpherson – Central NSW JO – Regional approach to local water utility strategic planning through IP&amp;R pilot.</li> </ul>
4	<b>Outcomes/actions from the previous meeting</b> The Panel received an update from the TWRRP team on the outcomes and actions from the previous meeting. Guidance on water supply and sewerage services pricing and financial management will be published today, 26 October.
5	<b>Operations update</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Glenn George provided an update to the Panel on work in DPE Water’s Operations Division.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Change of names and structure following restructure of DPE Water’s Operations Division. The team led by Jane Shepherd (acting for Michael Blackmore) with local water utilities will be named the Local Water Utilities Branch, and focus on support and regulation of local water utilities. Some programs including the Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewage Program and the Water Efficiency Program will become part of the new Urban Water Policy, Strategy and Programs branch.</li> <li>○ The Local Water Utility Branch structure has separated advisory and regulatory roles into separate teams, providing a clear distinction between these roles and additional clarity to local water utilities.</li> <li>○ Recruitment is currently underway for the Manager Regulatory Assessment and the Manager Technical Advisory and Training, plus other officer positions across the Local Water Utilities Branch.</li> <li>○ Feedback from local water utilities through the TWRRP has highlighted the value of regional teams, which have seen the addition of one permanent and</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Agenda item	Outcomes
	<p>one casual/backfill water and sewage treatment officer (inspector) in the Western region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Regional teams are beginning to work more collaboratively within DPE Water, sharing skills and knowledge across the regions through peer networks.</li> <li>○ The Local Water Utilities Branch is now implementing the internal and external guidance on the Section 60 approval process, including the new online portal for lodgement and tracking of applications.</li> <li>○ The Local Water Utilities Branch is working on developing specific guidance on the interaction between the new regulatory and assurance framework, and the Safe and Secure Water Program.</li> <li>○ The Local Water Utilities Branch oversees advice and support in response to emergencies impacting water services, including funding for emergency work to ensure critical service delivery.</li> <li>○ DPE Water assisted with advice leading to the allocation of \$145M over 3 years to support rebuilding of water supply and sewerage infrastructure after the North Coast floods.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A Panel Member raised a question of how the Local Water Utilities Branch will plan for future and emerging risks, including drought, and how will it know its work is effective? The Panel members discussed whether there may be examples of how strategic risk management and evaluation works for other contexts where there are interactions between councils and NSW Government (eg, roads). Cr Bill West agreed to consider examples of good practice in other contexts and share with the department.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION</b></p> <p>Cr Bill West to share with the department how strategic risk management and evaluation works for other interactions between councils and NSW Government (eg roads). This could be added to the agenda for the meeting between Cr West and the department (Graham Attenborough and Jane Shepherd) in Action 20.1.</p>
6	<p><b>Skills and training - update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The TWRRP team provided an update to the Panel on the national approach to training resources. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Challenges for skills and training are common across the country, there is an opportunity for a national approach as NSW responds to its local issues.</li> <li>○ NSW Water Directorate, WIOA, WSAA, AWA and the Queensland Water Directorates have echoed the needs and opportunities for skills and training.</li> <li>○ TWRRP led a project to identify a pathway for national water industry development of training resources. Thanks to panel members and their employees who contributed to the development.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Agenda item	Outcomes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The department has recently published a position paper starting a national conversation on training materials.</li> <li>○ Dr Jim Bentley (former CEO NSW Water Sector) wrote to other jurisdictions in support of the paper and a national approach. TWRRP shared with industry stakeholders.</li> <li>○ The department also raised this with the National Water Reform Committee, to have this issue reflected in the proposed refresh of the National Water Initiative.</li> <li>● A Panel Member asked about how short-term needs would be addressed, given the time taken to develop and operationalise a national approach. The TWRRP team noted that DPE Water could have a role in identifying and developing key resources.</li> <li>● A Panel Member noted the lack of success in improving availability of training delivery in the short term. The TWRRP team noted the limited progress in this area, and that skills and training is expected to be a key focus area of Phase 2 of the Town Water Risk Reduction Program.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION</b></p> <p>DPE Water to update the Panel on future role of DPE Water in training delivery.</p>
7	<p><b>Local water utilities roadshows</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Chair provided an update on a series of local water utility roadshows to be held in regional NSW by DPE Water and NSW Health. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Roadshows aim to work with the sector to inform and prioritise actions for Phase 2 of the TWRRP.</li> <li>○ Roadshows will be coordinated and led by NSW Health and DPE Water with possible involvement from EPA.</li> <li>○ Erin asked the SAP for feedback on how to make these effective?</li> </ul> </li> <li>● A Panel Member noted the difficulty in council staff attending roadshows given the time of year and competing priorities from other consultations.</li> <li>● A Panel Member suggested the roadshows include a presentation from a local water utility to avoid being wholly presentations from NSW Government agencies. Noted that the style of roadshow reflects the relationship between NSW Government and LWUs.</li> <li>● A Panel Member asked that the workshops clearly identify what local water utility staff can contribute to the roadshows.</li> <li>● Mr Patrick Lee from Local Government NSW suggested inviting elected councillors, and will support this invitation being made.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION</b></p> <p>DPE Water to incorporate Panel feedback incorporated into the design of the roadshows.</p>
8	<p><b>Strategic planning guidance – update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The TWRRP team provided an update on the development of guidance to support the strategic planning assurance framework.</li> </ul>

Agenda item	Outcomes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Development of external guidance is progressing. There have been some delays where necessary to ensure quality, with priority guidance is being actioned first.</li> <li>○ Internal guidance is being developed in parallel and is linked to the content of the external guidance.</li> <li>○ Web portal for Section 60 applications is now live, and the team is working through the internal assessment guidance.</li> <li>● A Panel Member noted that delays in delivering guidance do not indicate a successful process, and that the reason for delays and process of prioritising should be specified. The Chair responded noting that many delays were short, and due to lack of resources (including contracted resources) and a desire to get the guidance right. The guidance include a commitment to continual improvement where the department of stakeholders identify future improvements.</li> <li>● Ms Amanda Chadwick noted the importance of clarifying the difference between regulatory process and advice/support role. The department will support communication and education for local water utilities and within DPE Water to make requests clearly and to the right person. There is a general need to improve clarity of DPE Water’s role – what is an approval, what is advice, what is review and assurance. Mr Glenn George agreed need for clarity is important; and should be a focus of the regional workshops. Culture change is needed within both local water utilities and DPE Water to adopt new processes.</li> </ul>
9	<p><b>Dividend methodology review – update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The TWRRP team provided an update on the project to review the dividend payment methodology. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Review will look at the eligibility and calculation previously published in the regulatory and assurance framework.</li> <li>○ Revised process requires publishing in the NSW Government Gazette and must be completed before caretaker conventions apply in March 2023.</li> <li>○ Review will include targeted consultation and a focus group in 2022.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● A Panel Member noted the difficulty in council staff engaging in a review given consultation fatigue and end of year busyness. The TWRRP team responded, noting the small group of local water utilities that will be most impacted, and that consultation will specifically target and respond to those impacted and those likely to be interested.</li> </ul>
10	<p><b>Other matters raised by Panel members</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CNSWJO asked about progress on guidance to support use of the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework to address water service management. The Chair responded noting that specific guidance on this issue has been published and that all strategic planning guidance documents refer to the IP&amp;R framework. DPE Water will look for opportunities to work with utilities interested in using the IP&amp;R framework to respond to strategic planning assurance in late 2022 or in 2023.</li> <li>● The Chair acknowledged Mr Andrew Fraser’s retirement, and thanked him for his contribution to the TWRRP, especially engagement with Water NSW and utility support pilots. Congratulations Andrew, on your career and all the best for your retirement.</li> </ul>

Agenda item	Outcomes
12	<p><b>Next meeting and close</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The next and final Panel meeting is 16 November 2022 (one week early due to roadshows the following week). Panel members were asked to put in requests for content.</li> </ul>

## Actions arising from 26 October 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
21.1	Cr Bill West to share with the department how strategic risk management and evaluation works for other interactions between councils and NSW Government (eg roads). This could be added to the agenda for the meeting between Cr West and the department (Graham Attenborough and Jane Shepherd) in Action 20.1.	Cr Bill West	December 2022
21.2	DPE Water to update the Panel on future role of DPE Water in training delivery.	TWRRP team	16 November 2022
21.3	DPE Water to incorporate Panel feedback incorporated into the design of the roadshows.	Jane Shepherd and Erin Cini	18 November 2022

© State of New South Wales through Department of Planning and Environment 2022. The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing November 2022). However, because of advances in knowledge, users should ensure that the information upon which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate departmental officer or the user's independent adviser.