

Town Water Risk Reduction Program—Outcomes and action items

Meeting 7 | 28 July 2021, 9:30 – 11:30 am

Attendees

Table 1. Attendees.

Invitees	Guests	Others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clr Bill West, Local Government NSW • Mr Brendan Guiney, NSW Water Directorate • Mr Aaron Drenovski, General Manager, Goldenfields Water County Council • Ms Leslie Jarvis, Acting Manager NSW Health Water Unit (for Katrina Wall) • Mr Graham Kennett, General Manager, Kyogle Council • Mr Peter Marczan, Manager Technical Assessments and Advice, Environment Protection Authority • Mr Michael Blackmore, Director Water Utilities, DPIE Water • Ms Melissa Gibbs, Director Policy & Sector Development, OLG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Sanjiv Sathiah, Senior Policy Officer, Infrastructure and Finance, LGNSW • Ms Carmel Krogh OAM, TWRRP Program Advisor • Ms Amanda Chadwick, Executive Director Water Sector Reform, DPIE Water • Ms Lucinda Maunsell, Principal Planning Officer Metropolitan Water Strategies, DPIE Water (for item 5) • Ms Zahra Anver, A/Director, State Water Strategy, DPIE Water (for item 6) 	<p>Town Water Risk Reduction Program team members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Erin Cini – Director (Chair) • Mr Sascha Moege • Mr Glen Colley (Secretariat) • Dr Nanda Altavilla • Mr Josh Tickell • Mr Padraic Gidney • Mr Andrew Fraser.

Apologies

- Dr Annalisa Contos, Principal Consultant, Atom Consulting
- Mr David Kirby, LWU Manager, Brewarrina Shire Council
- Dr Katrina Wall, Acting Manager NSW Health Water Unit

Outcomes

Table 2. Agenda items and outcomes.

Agenda item	Outcomes
1	Acknowledgement of country/welcome
2	Outcomes/actions from the previous meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All action items from the 22 June 2021 meeting were complete. Although it was noted that the Local Government NSW conference not proceeding in July meant the first two items were no longer applicable.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The Panel requested that the regulatory engagement commentary from the 22 June meeting minutes be updated to reflect the feedback from the sector that what applies to one LGA doesn't necessarily apply across the whole State.

3

Regulatory roadmap and workshop series - update

- The program team provided an update on the development of the draft roadmap, including the finalisation of the regional (face to face and online) workshops that the team conducted in June.
- A copy of the draft roadmap was provided to Panel members on Tuesday 27 July and discussed at the meeting.
- The Panel noted that not enough time had been provided to look at the draft roadmap in detail and committed to providing any specific priority feedback by 30 July (so feedback could be incorporated ahead of the launch on 4 August).
- However, the Panel noted its broad support for the roadmap development process, including the stakeholder engagement approach. The Panel also noted that the roadmap appears to reflect the broad feedback of the sector provided throughout the engagement process.
- The Panel provided a range of high-level feedback on the draft roadmap during the meeting, which is summarised below.
- Some Panel members raised concerns about the use of the word partnership in describing the draft roadmap development process, as the document has been compiled by the DPIE Water based on the sector engagement undertaken. These Panel members also reiterated that:
 - It is fine to say there has been collaboration and consultation in developing the document – but the word partnership could be misconstrued.
 - The program team need to be always mindful of this language issue.
- In response, the program team noted that:
 - the document is a draft and stakeholders will be given ample opportunity to comment on the document after its release.
 - The roadmap will be updated to make clearer that the sector will have more input into the review and monitoring process.
- The program team noted that the Panel has not specifically endorsed the document, this is aligned to the Panel's advisory role.
- The Panel asked for clarification about who is going to assess the implementation of the commitments made in the draft roadmap. The team advised that that the sector will have input into the review and monitoring process.
- Some Panel members suggested that the importance of the timely provision of information by the department needs to be emphasised more clearly in the roadmap.
- The Panel requested that the beginning of the document acknowledge the other focus areas of the TWRRP (ie. beyond the regulatory focus area) and emphasise the interconnectedness of the focus areas.
- The Panel noted that there is a lot of work being done in the sector that is relevant to the whole program, (eg. Jos around collaboration and training), and that as acknowledging this is a way to build good will and engagement.
- The Panel advised that the presentation of this roadmap to the industry is important, particularly to overcome scepticism about genuine nature of the partnership approach.
- The Panel asked that, as the team moves forward into workshops – can the Panel also be sent invitations or notifications to ensure every possible person can participate.

- The Panel discussed how the draft roadmap could more clearly articulate the sector's feedback on Integrated Water Cycle Management (IWCM), specifically:
 - That the importance of IWCM as a key planning approach for councils is not clearly acknowledged in the roadmap. The roadmap should not disparage IWCM as a concept which remains a worthwhile objective, instead the roadmap should highlight the concerns the sector has about the current approach to the 'IWCM strategies' required by DPIE Water. By not having IWCM mentioned clearly in the roadmap, it gives the impression that DPIE Water is abandoning the concept.
 - That the process for reviewing IWCM strategies is not clear and must be articulated in the roadmap. The team clarified that:
 - Based on sector feedback, the draft roadmap proposes to move water strategic planning towards an outcome focussed approach.
 - The proposed approach is to work with the sector to define what the outcomes are, how the department as the regulator will assess how utilities are complying, and to ultimately design a new framework that would replace the existing IWCM checklist.
 - Utilities would then be required to demonstrate how they meet those outcomes.
- The program team noted that the Minister for Water and Minister for Local Government have been briefed on the directions proposed in the roadmap. The Panel offered support to brief the Minister on any issues of concerns.
- The Panel enquired as to progress of discussions regarding collaboration with other regulators.
 - The program team provided an update of the approach to date.
 - The program team explained how this had been addressed in the draft roadmap.
 - The co-regulator Panel members shared that they are particularly keen to reduce duplication as much as possible and cover regulatory responsibilities in an integrated way. A priority is ensuring that the roles of co-regulators are clear and where they interact is defined.
 - It was noted that the EPA has been progressing through a transformation process which has broadly similar themes to what the TWRRP is considering. The Panel suggested that other methods beyond interagency meetings be considered. For example, a roundtable with Water Directorate and LGNSW at the table would be an ideal approach to allow LWUs to have their voice heard at the time.
 - The Program team committed to organising a session on this issue for a future SAP meeting.
- The issue of State-Owned Corporation (SOC) support was discussed.
 - The program team noted that SOC support is not specifically covered in the roadmap because the roadmap sets out the approach to improve the regulatory framework for local water utilities. The Panel suggested that the team include a reference to state government support, including SOC support, in the enablers section.

Agenda item	Outcomes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Panel supported ongoing meetings with the SOCs to discuss about how the sector can work better together. ○ It was noted that there are existing touch points which the program team need to continue to make sure are included in any such discussion (eg. training, digital water utilities, smart places discussions etc). ○ LGNSW advised that it had a meeting with Sydney Water last week to discuss this issue where it became clear about the extent of the knowledge and expertise the sector can tap into at Sydney Water. ○ The Program team will discuss this further with Sanjiv Sathiah, about who LGNSW spoke to at Sydney Water.
4	<p>IWCM strategy pilots - discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Two Panel members declared conflicts of interest in relation to the following specific IWCM strategy pilot expressions of interest received and discussed at the meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cowra Shire Council – Clr Bill West ○ Namoi Joint Organisations of Councils – Ms Rebel Thomson. ● The program team provided an overview of the progress of this element of the regulatory improvement focus area, and the next steps in relation to the councils that have been advised as having submitted successful EOIs. ● The Panel suggested that other councils may be open to a discussion regarding exploring regional approaches to IWCM strategies (eg. Richmond Valley in the context of Rous County Council). ● The program team noted that any additional EOIs would depend on the scope of the project, including what progress can be made inside a year.

Agenda item	Outcomes
5	<p data-bbox="296 439 699 472">Regional collaboration - update</p> <ul data-bbox="344 495 1428 1612" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="344 495 1428 786">• The program team provided an overview of the proposed next steps on this focus area, emphasising:<ul data-bbox="440 573 1428 786" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="440 573 1428 674">○ The intention to hire a person from the sector with water expertise to be regionally based and assist councils to implement several identified regional collaboration activities as pilots on a part time basis.<li data-bbox="440 685 1428 752">○ That the focus of any pilot programs in this focus area will be on risk reduction activities.<li data-bbox="440 763 1428 786">○ The resource is to support the team, not replace other approaches.<li data-bbox="344 797 1428 1424">• The Panel advised that:<ul data-bbox="440 842 1428 1424" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="440 842 1428 943">○ Having a position to coordinate regional collaboration is reasonable as a pilot – particularly in relation to looking at what is working well in the industry as opposed to solving the problems, in the timeframe.<li data-bbox="440 954 1428 1021">○ Having the position only be part time may be problematic. Collaboration is hard and a part time position may make it difficult to progress.<li data-bbox="440 1032 1428 1099">○ Another approach would be to have a support person within a JO or council. JOs were established for this purpose.<li data-bbox="440 1111 1428 1178">○ JOs should have been consulted earlier on this proposal. Glen Colley from the program team committed to contacting Rebel Thomson to discuss this further.<li data-bbox="440 1189 1428 1256">○ There is great opportunity to make change because there is not a lot established<li data-bbox="440 1267 1428 1424">○ The program should look outside departmental resources to drive change in this area. For example, it was noted that at the Commonwealth Productivity Commission hearings, Queensland Water Directorate cited local approaches such as the Central NSW JO Water Utilities Alliance as an example of success).<li data-bbox="344 1435 1428 1612">• The Panel asked whether the program team will be coordinating the Government's response to the NSW Productivity Commission recommendation regarding regional collaboration for local water utilities.<ul data-bbox="440 1559 1428 1612" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="440 1559 1428 1612">○ The team advised that it would need to follow up on this and would provide an update to the Panel.

Agenda item	Outcomes
6	<p>Engaging with LWUs on the Water Efficiency Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lucinda Maunsell (from DPIE Water’s Metropolitan Water Strategies team) and Michael Blackmore presented on the work they have been leading in relation to the NSW Water Efficiency Program and requested advice on how best to engage with the local water utility sector on this work. • The Panel provided the following advice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Central JO has done a lot of work in terms of leakage (Orange and Parkes in particular). Tenterfield is another good resource. ○ Water efficiency has become a bit of a buzz word. Some measures may be practical and others not. It was suggested that the department be careful about the way it phrases the problem. ○ Water efficiency is more important in some areas than others (primarily because of water source issues). ○ Joint organisations (JOs) of councils will be a good conduit for engagement.
7	<p>Engagement approach for State Water Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zahra Anver from DPIE Water’s Water Strategies Team, requested advice from the Panel regarding sharing the forthcoming State Water Strategy with the local water utility sector. • The Panel provided the following advice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support for sharing the State Water Strategy with local water utilities and providing an understanding of how feedback was incorporated. ○ Remember that one size doesn’t fit all when engaging with LWUs. ○ A webinar would be most appropriate under the current circumstances and has worked well in the past. ○ Joint organisations (JOs) of councils have repeatedly expressed that they want to understand how they can be part of the implementation of the regional and State water strategies. It would worth exploring how JOs could be used as a conduit for engaging with member councils. This could be done by attending individual JO board meetings or the whole of NSW JO executive group, for example. ○ It was noted that, overall, JOs are less than enthused about what they are seeing in the regional water strategies about local issues.
8	<p>TWRRP Engagement summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team provided an overview of the engagement undertaken in the previous month
9	<p>Next meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 August 2021, 9:30-11:30 am.

Actions arising from 28 July 2021 meeting

Table 3. Summary of actions.

Item no.	Action	Responsibility	Due date
7.1	Update 22 June meeting minutes to reflect the feedback from the sector that what applies to one LGA doesn't necessarily apply across the State.	Glen Colley	6 August 2021
7.2	Provide feedback on the draft roadmap	Panel members	30 July 2021
7.3	Update Roadmap to incorporate Panel feedback	Sascha Moege	4 August 2021
7.4	Organise a future Panel session on the progress of discussions with co-regulators and potential improved approaches.	Glen Colley	23 September 2021
7.5	Contact Sanjiv Sathiah to discuss who LGNSW spoke to at Sydney Water about SOC support and make sure this is aligned with TWRRP program.	Padraic Gidney	25 August 2021
7.6	Confirm whether the TWRRP will be contributing to the Government's response to the NSW Productivity Commission white paper recommendation regarding regional collaboration for local water utilities.	Glen Colley	25 August 2021
7.7	Contact Rebel Thomson (Namoi JO) to discuss proposed regional collaboration approach	Glen Colley	Before 2 August 2021

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