

Town Water Risk Reduction Program—Outcomes and action items

Meeting 6 | 22 June 2021, 9:30 – 11:30 am

Attendees

Table 1. Attendees.

Invitees	Guests
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clr Bill West, Local Government NSW • Mr Brendan Guiney, NSW Water Directorate • Ms Rebel Thomson Executive Officer Namoi Joint Organisation of Councils • Mr David Kirby, LWU Manager, Brewarrina Shire Council • Dr Annalisa Contos, Principal Consultant, Atom Consulting • Ms Leslie Jarvis, Acting Manager NSW Health Water Unit (for Katrina Wall) • Mr Peter Marczan, Manager Technical Assessments and Advice, Environment Protection Authority • Mr Tim Welchman, Principal Policy Officer, OLG (for Melissa Gibbs) • Mr Glenn George, Regional Manager Water Utilities (North), Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - Water (for Michael Blackmore) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Amanda Chadwick, Executive Director Water Sector Reform, DPIE Water • Ms Jane Blakeney – Communications Manager, DPIE Water
	<p>Program team</p> <p>Town Water Risk Reduction Program team members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Erin Cini – Director (Chair) • Mr Sascha Moege • Mr Josh Tickell • Mr Padraic Gidney (acting Secretariat) • Mr Andrew Fraser

Apologies

- Mr Michael Blackmore, Director Water Utilities, DPIE Water (Glenn George standing in)
- Mr Aaron Drenovski – General Manager, Goldenfields Water County Council
- Ms Melissa Gibbs, Director Policy & Sector Development, OLG (Tim Welchman standing in)
- Mr Graham Kennett, General Manager, Kyogle Council
- Ms Carmel Krogh OAM, TWRRP Program Advisor
- Mr Sanjiv Sathiah, Senior Policy Officer, Infrastructure and Finance, LGNSW
- Dr Katrina Wall, A/Manager - NSW Health Water Unit (Leslie Jarvis standing in).

Update on actions from previous meeting

Table 2. Actions from last meeting.

Action	Responsible	Status
At the 27/05/21 meeting of the chairs and executives of NSW Joint Organisations, mention that the TWRRP team would welcome input in this area from any interested Joint Organisations. Also engage directly with Central NSW JO and Namoi JO.	Erin Cini (TWRRP team)	Complete
Provide the Panel with information about who has signed up to these events so far and ask for advice on how to address any gaps or imbalances in composition.	Erin Cini (TWRRP team)	Complete
Seek Local Government NSW input on the proposed consultancy.	Glen Colley (TWRRP team)	Complete
Seek Local Government NSW input on gaps in the existing support arrangements.	Paddy Gidney (TWRRP team)	Complete
Have a follow-up discussion with Jenny Bennett about how to manage these risks to optimise the TWRRP team's virtual workshops.	Sascha Moege (TWRRP team)	Complete
Refine the language of the proposed consultancy to emphasise that the focus is on removing barriers for Councils who see the value in an integrated approach.	Glen Colley (TWRRP team)	Complete

Actions arising from this meeting

Table 3. Actions from this meeting.

No.	Issue	Action	Responsible, due date
1	Stakeholder engagement	Use the LGNSW conference in early July as an opportunity to check in on the engagement of councillors with the program.	TWRRP team.9 July 2021
2	Stakeholder engagement	Update the LGNSW conference presentation to reflect the Panel's views.	Erin Cini 5 July 2021

No.	Issue	Action	Responsible, due date
3	Stakeholder engagement	Update wording of information presented in workshops (and future program materials) about “strategic planning should be reviewed” to ensure councils do not see this an emphasising greater regulation.	TWRRP team25 June 2021

Panel guidance

Item 1: Action items

- All action items from the 26 May 2021 meeting were complete.

Item 2: Update on regulatory framework workshop series (virtual and in-person regional workshops)

- The team provided an overview of the four virtual workshops held on 2 and 15 June, and of the Griffith face to face workshop held on 21 June 2021.
- Feedback provided in the workshops is consistent with the views of stakeholders that had been observed in earlier engagement by the program team, and there was broad agreement on the focus areas of the program.
- The workshops (particularly the Griffith workshop) emphasised the diversity of circumstances in which individual LWUs operate and the unique issues they face. This reinforced the need for a flexible approach to regulation (ie. not implementing a one size fits all approach), which should be reflected in the roadmap and must guide the program going forward.
- The team should also be mindful to ensure that views expressed in individual workshops relating to local priorities and actions are not ignored and are incorporated into the TWRRP work program.
- The team should be mindful to check in on stakeholders who have not been strongly represented to date. For example, elected representatives who traditionally are not engaged on this issue. The team should use the LGNSW Conference in July as an opportunity to check in on the engagement of councillors.
- Water pricing does not appear to have been discussed in great detail. For example, councils will likely have strong views on the 75/25 income split between the usage and access charges but may not have expressed them.
- In any conversations about pricing and water restrictions, the team should be sensitive to issues of liveability and mental health that came out of the last drought.
- The wording of information presented in workshops (and future program materials) about “strategic planning should be reviewed” should be updated to ensure councils do not see this as emphasising greater regulation.
- Future workshop introductory material will be updated to give more context to people who haven’t had previous involvement in the program.

Regulatory workshop roadmap

- The team advised that a roadmap document will be presented at the LGNSW Conference in July, reflecting the outcomes of the workshops. This will highlight the steps to achieving the program outcomes.
- The team will also produce a “what we heard in the workshops” document to highlight the diversity of views.
- There is broad agreement that honesty needs to be the underpinning principle (about what we heard and that DPIE Water is part of the problem), also about what we do next and not saying that everything is finalised and agreed.

Item 3: LGNSW conference

- The TWRRP program presentation at the Conference should reflect what has been heard to date (including in the virtual and face to face workshops), commit to the actions where they are clear but also acknowledge that there are a range of things where there is no agreed way forward yet, and indicate openness to other views.
- The Panel suggested that the presentation start off by highlighting the early wins of the program to date (and planned) and then move into the regulatory reform information, which some participants may find complex and, as a result, disengage.
- The conference interaction needs to be a two-way conversation. People should be able to ask questions and think things through. This could be facilitated in the Water Directorate forum in the afternoon.
- The team need to be conscious that there will be a number of people in attendance who have not had any experience of the program, and therefore explain the whole program (not just focus on the regulatory component). This will ensure that participants don't think the Program is only about the regulatory framework.
- Panel members expressed that it is important that people don't feel rushed into providing feedback or arriving at a position on issues. People need time to get onboard. The team should acknowledge that some things will not necessarily be resolved in 12 months' time. The team will continue to check in with the Stakeholder Advisory Panel for feedback on timelines.

Item 4: Integrated planning and report (IP&R)/Integrated Water Cycle Management (IWCM) project update

- The team provided an overview of the progress of this project.
- The Panel suggested that the team clarify who the decision maker is, particularly in relation to any suggested changes to the IP&R framework arising from this work.
- The team should continue to work closely with OLG, as the agency responsible for IP&R. However, the involvement of LGNSW and the Water Directorate was also acknowledged.

Item 5: Skills and training (Nanda)

- The team provided an overview of the skills and training focus area work to date, and the Panel noted progress.
- Panel members clarified that the Local Government Act provides liability indemnity protections for councillors and staff.

Item 6: Enhancing support for LWUs in emergencies

- The team provided an overview of the workshop held with state agencies and SOCs on Friday 18 June in relation to the emergency support for LWUs, as well as the related session held at the Griffith TWRRP workshop on 21 June 2021.
- The Panel noted that regional collaboration and enhanced State support were highlighted as two main opportunities for improvement in this space.
- The team plans to hold a second workshop (in the same vein as the 18 June workshop with councils that have expressed interest in the regional workshops).

Item 7: Engagement summary

- The team provided an overview of the engagement undertaken in the previous month.
- The team will provide more information about the status of IWCM pilots at the next SAP meeting.
- It was noted that future co-regulator meetings will also include NRAR (along with OLG, NSW Health and EPA, who attended at present).

Item 8: Other matters

- There are various conferences coming up in the next few months which the team will also be attending.
- Panel members suggested that the team start thinking about attendance at the LGNSW Annual conference in November.
- Panel members were encouraged to complete and promote the regulator perceptions survey, which closes on 30 June 2021.

Next meeting

- 28 July 2021