

Town Water Risk Reduction Program—Outcomes and action items

Meeting 10 | 25 October 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 (items 1 – 4, 6 – 7) • Mr Graham Kennett, General Manager, Kyogle Council • Dr Katrina Wall, Acting Manager NSW Health Water Unit • Mr Peter Marczan, Manager Technical Assessments and Advice, Environment Protection Authority (items 1 – 6) • Mr Michael Blackmore, Director Water Utilities, DPIE Water (items 1 – 5) • Ms Melissa Gibbs, Director Policy & Sector Development, OLG (items 1 – 5) 	<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 • Mr Graham Attenborough, Chief Operating Officer, DPIE Water (items 1 – 5) 	<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

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 September 2021 meeting were complete except:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Glen Colley has contacted David Kirby of Brewarrina Shire Council to further discuss Crown Lands issues relate to water and has arranged a meeting the Crown Lands Commissioner's Office. Will provide further feedback to Panel.○ Panel members to provide input about who should be involved in the performance monitoring focus team.

Agenda item	Outcomes
3	<p data-bbox="296 439 925 472">Investigate alternate funding models - discussion</p> <ul data-bbox="344 495 1428 1818" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="344 495 1428 633">• The TWRRP team:<ul data-bbox="440 539 1428 633" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="440 539 1428 633">○ presented an overview of the approach to investigating alternate funding models, to obtain feedback from the Panel before briefing the DPIE Water Executive on the matter.<li data-bbox="344 651 1428 1818">• Feedback from the Panel included:<ul data-bbox="440 696 1428 1818" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="440 696 1428 730">○ The Panel was supportive of starting a conversation with the sector.<li data-bbox="440 734 1428 801">○ The Panel provided feedback that the TWRRP team was well-placed to recommend an appropriate entity to undertake the review.<li data-bbox="440 806 1428 1344">○ Proposed limitations to any investigation of this nature need to be clearly articulated to the sector and the public. Previous reports on these issues have created confusion amongst communities. While using the terms “no forced amalgamation” and “no transfer of ownership” is positive, one Panel member noted this language may still create concern. The NSW Government needs to be aware of the ongoing suspicion in the sector/community of a ‘hidden agenda’ on these issues.<ul data-bbox="536 1064 1428 1344" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="536 1064 1428 1164">▪ The TWRRP team noted that the focus of the investigation is to look at the pros and cons of alternative arrangements to funding local water utilities, including a Community Service Obligation (CSO) option.<li data-bbox="536 1169 1428 1344">▪ The focus will not on structural considerations. However, some Panel members suggested that the CSO discussion could naturally lead down that line of enquiry regardless. The TWRRP team also noted that the work will include a focus on how productive the current approach to Government funding for LWUs<li data-bbox="440 1348 1428 1518">○ Some Panel members suggested using the language “affordability” instead or in addition to “efficiency”. Other Panel members suggested that the TWRRP team ensure that the project does not focus on the efficiency of LWUs, but instead on how the Government can most effectively and efficiently support local water utilities.<li data-bbox="440 1523 1428 1671">○ Some Panel members noted it is critical to define the disadvantage we are trying to address and how to measure it. The unique circumstances (location, geography, demographics) of areas are a big impact on the challenges facing local water utilities.<li data-bbox="440 1675 1428 1742">○ The TWRRP team will reflect the Panel’s feedback in the Terms of Reference for the review and briefing to DPIE Water Executive.<li data-bbox="440 1747 1428 1818">○ The TWRRP team will keep the Panel updated on how these discussions progress.

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Pilots - discussion

- The TWRRP team gave an overview of confirmed pilots. The pilots are considered in two categories those that are focused on testing and improving the reg framework and pilots to reduce risk. The TWRRP team advised that pilots could continue through 2022 but would need to be measured/evaluated around June/July to inform the next phase of the TWRRP. If the pilot makes sense and there is an interest in making it happen, then the TWRRP team are trying to make it happen.
- Feedback from the Panel included the following:
 - It is good to have such a wide-ranging series of pilots to test potential approaches and it is positive to see that so many are underway. The pilot process is also an important way of building acceptance of the process that TWRRP is undertaking.
 - Prioritisation of pilots needs to be thought about in the context of benefits realisation and risk reduction measures - which are the most important ones, and which are the ones with the most tangible/important benefits to share?
 - Pilots should be linked to the Safe and Secure Water Program risk profiles of participating councils to actively demonstrate that we are achieving benefits and reducing risks. The TWRRP team advised that they are using the risk profiles information in addition other factors.
 - It was noted that the Panel had previously supported the pilot selection criteria used by the TWRRP.
 - Goldenfields advised that it would like to discuss a potential filter metering pilot. The TWRRP team will follow this up directly with Goldenfields Water.
 - The TWRRP should consider the issue of regional approaches to workforce planning as water utilities will have expertise to offer here.
 - The Department needs to be careful to ensure that IWCM strategy related pilots are informing the broader discussions about a new regulatory framework for strategic water planning, and that participating councils are not disadvantaged but undertaking a pilot under the existing IWCM framework.
 - The TWRRP team advised that this issue was anticipated and undertook to provide the Panel with another copy of the Department's previous public statement that such councils would suffer no disadvantage.
 - The TWRRP should better articulate how water security is being addressed in its program.
 - The TWRRP team advised that many of the IWCM strategy related pilots are looking at water security issues (eg, secure yield considerations and Namoi JO and Central NSW JO pilots).
 - The Department's water efficiency and leakage program is focussing on this, as are the Safe and Secure Water Program and Regional Water Strategies program. The Panel suggested that the focus on water security be articulated more clearly in communications about the program and pilots.
 - A Panel member requested that the TWRRP team put page numbers on documents (including meeting presentations) to make it easier to locate items.

Agenda item	Outcomes
5	<p>Working groups - update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The TWRRP team provided an overview of the two regulatory framework working groups which both met for the first time this month. A consultant is currently being onboarded to support the working groups to design the improved regulatory framework for strategic planning, and technical assessments and approvals. More information will be provided to the Panel at the November meeting.
6	<p>Implementation - update</p> <p>Resourcing of Integrate Water Cycle Management strategy support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The DPIE Water Utilities team provided an update on resourcing of IWCM/strategic planning. The Panel noted the positive news of increased resourcing for regional teams and noted that these teams are a critical support role for councils, especially with more than 60 IWCMs currently in development. Panel members asked questions about where Water Infrastructure NSW's (WINSW) delivery approach fits with DPIE Water's existing regional teams. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The DPIE Water Utilities team advised that WINSW is not a replacement of the Water Utilities team, instead WINSW provides an extra support layer. The two teams work together every day to ensure that projects get delivered. The Panel requested that further clarity be provided about where the DPIE Water Utilities team's roles and responsibilities finish and the WINSW team starts. <p>Water efficiency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The DPIE Water Utilities team provided an update on this project. Panel members noted that water security is very important but so is responsible use of water. It is important to recognise the social and mental health benefits that responsible water usage brings in regional towns (eg. water sporting fields etc). The DPIE Water Utilities team reiterated that water efficiency measures introduced through the program will be to benefit local communities (eg: reduce water bills, improve services etc).
7	<p>Skills and training - update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The TWRRP team provided an overview of the recent work in this area. .
8	<p>Panel items for discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No additional items were raised for discussion. Panel members reiterated the need for councillor training in relation to water management issues, particularly in the context of the upcoming council elections on 4 December. The TWRRP team advised that a draft of the councillor training material is being finalised and is on the agenda for the next meeting.

Agenda item	Outcomes
9	<p>Next meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 November 2021, 9:30-11:30 am. • Members were reminded that the December meeting will move forward one week to 15 December, to accommodate Christmas/New Year's shut down periods and leave. • Panel members supported the proposal that no meeting be held in January 2022 as many people will be on leave. • The TWRRP is considering holding a face to face meeting the LGNSW Water Conference in Narrabri in February 2022, which will be discussed that the November meeting. • It was noted that the appointment of the LGNSW councillor representative to the Panel will lapse on 5 November when all NSW councils move into caretaker mode. This will continue until councillors are confirmed in late December, meaning that there will be no LGNSW elected representative at the November or December Panel meetings. The TWRRP team will talk to LGNSW about alternative arrangements. • Finally, it was noted that the Minister has approved the final roadmap. The TWRRP team will share when this is published and there will also be a notice in the TWRRP newsletter.

Actions arising from 25 October 2021 meeting

Table 3. Summary of actions.

Item no.	Action	Responsibility	Due date
10.1	Advise the Panel of the outcomes of discussions with Brewarrina Shire Council and Office of the Crown Lands Commissioner re Crown Lands issues	Glen Colley	23 Nov. 2021
10.2	Reflect the Panel's feedback in the Terms of Reference for the review and briefing to DPIE Water Executive and provide the Panel with an overview of how these discussions progress.	TWRRP Team	23 Nov. 2021
10.3	Provide the Panel with another copy of the Department's previous public statement that participating IWCM pilot councils would suffer no disadvantage as a result of changes to the strategic water planning framework.	TWRRP team	23 Nov. 2021
10.4	Provide further clarity to the sector about the roles of DPIE Water's LWU Operations Team the WINSW team in relation to support for councils.	TWRRP/Operations teams	23 Nov. 2021

Item no.	Action	Responsibility	Due date
10.5	Explain more clearly in communications around the TWRRP program and pilots how water security issues are being considered.	TWRRP/Operations teams	Ongoing
10.6	Follow up with LGNSW regarding Panel elected representative member during council caretaker period.	TWRRP team	23 Nov. 2021
10.7	Put page numbers on the Panel slides and other documents to allow ease of reference.	TWRRP team	23 Nov. 2021

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