

Town Water Risk Reduction Program—Outcomes and action items

Meeting 22 | 16 November 2022, 9:30 – 11:30 am

Attendees

Table 1. Attendees.

Invitees	Guests	Others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clr Bill West, Local Government NSW (from item 5) • Mr Aaron Drenovski, Goldenfields Water • Mr Brendan Guiney, NSW Water Directorate • Dr Annalisa Contos, Atom Consulting • Ms Meredith MacPherson, Central NSW JO • Dr Paul Byleveld, NSW Health Water Unit • Mr Peter Marczan, Manager Technical Assessments & Advice, Environment Protection Authority (from item 5) • Mr Glenn George, Regional Manager North, Local Water Utilities, DPE Water • Ms Erin Cini – Director Town Water Risk Reduction Program (Chair) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Carmel Krogh, Independent Advisor to DPE Water • Mr Patrick Lee, Local Government NSW • Ms Amanda Chadwick, DPE Water • Mr Graham Attenborough, DPE Water 	<p>Town Water Risk Reduction Program team members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Josh Tickell • Mr Sascha Moege • Ms Alex Vaughan (items 1-9)

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	<p>Acknowledgement of country and meeting welcome</p>
2	<p>Safety reflection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Glenn George gave a safety reflection related to bike riding and road awareness. Cycling on the road has high risks, a number of people have been killed or had serious accidents. Visibility for drivers can be poor. Drivers and cyclists should be cautious and aware in situations where you have poor visibility, especially rural roads and roads with no road shoulder.
3	<p>Administrative matters</p> <p>Declarations of conflicts of interest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 Ms Meredith Macpherson – Central NSW JO – Regional approach to local water utility strategic planning through IP&R pilot.
4	<p>Outcomes/actions from the previous meeting</p> <p>The Chair spoke to actions arising from previous minutes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional roadshows in Dubbo, Tamworth and Griffith have been cancelled. Coffs Harbour to go ahead as planned, Queanbeyan to be advised depending on numbers. DPE Water will plan alternative regional meetings with regional alliances, and consider online meetings for regulatory updates. Panel members to dangerous road conditions across regional NSW after flooding due to damage. NSW Government staff are limiting road travel in regions. TWRRP has recently published a range of materials. Four strategic planning guidance documents are currently available on the TWRRP website, two further documents to be uploaded in the coming days. Dividend methodology framework discussion paper has been published, targeted engagement on this issue. Six councillor case studies are available on the TWRRP website.
5	<p>Operations update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Glenn George provided an update to the Panel on work in DPE Water’s Operations Division. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vacant positions are being recruited. Including, 3 positions in regulatory assessment team, one regional engineer and one senior water and sewage treatment officer (inspector).

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Implementation of the new arrangements in the Local Water Utilities Branch for works approval (section 60 process) well underway following Regulatory and Assurance Framework commencing on 1 July 2022. ○ Additional guidance on water security assessment being finalised and will be released as guidance soon. ○ Local Water Utilities Branch working collaboratively within the new organisational design and engaging with local water utilities. Focus on understanding needs of industry, supporting incident and emergency response, and supporting resource shortages through skills and training. ○ Regional teams are working closely with local water utilities to progress response to high risks under Safe and Secure Water Program and to support flood response. ○ DPE Water and NSW Health have met to discuss the implementation of Health Based Targets and the implications on the regulatory processes for both agencies. Preliminary position will be discussed with local water utilities at regional roadshows and other updates in coming weeks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Panel members reflected on the department’s attendance at the NSW Water Directorate forum last week. Discussion on change in focus from the department approving processes such as strategic planning issues papers, to providing objectives and guidance for utilities and strategic planning assurance (not approval). ● Following the conclusion of Phase 1 of the Town Water Risk Reduction Program, Graham Attenborough (Chief Operating Officer, DPE Water) committed to continuing engagement with the local water utility sector and implementing ongoing actions, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ commitment to regular engagement with utilities including annual regional roadshow ○ useful and up to date website ○ shift towards collecting data and information to prioritise risks and target support and advice where needed. ○ working with Safe and Secure Water Program team (Water Infrastructure NSW) to ensure project funding is provided quickly and smoothly to local water utilities. <p>ACTION</p> <p>DPE Water to confirm stakeholder engagement mechanisms from 2023 onwards.</p>
6	<p>Safe and Secure Water Program update</p> <p>Item held off for separate industry update.</p>
7	<p>TWRRP pilots - update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The TWRRP team provided an update to the Panel on three pilot projects. ● Update on the WaterNSW river operations pilot. Detail provided on slides.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ WaterNSW worked with Hay Shire and Murrumbidgee councils to understand their operations and interaction with regulated rivers. ○ WaterNSW ran workshops with the local water utilities and other stakeholders to find opportunities for more coordinated operations. ○ Project identified new processes for early communications, opportunities to adjust operations to improve raw water quality, and to improve raw water quality monitoring. ○ Actions reflected in operational plans and strategies. ○ Great benefit in developing relationships and understanding between WaterNSW and local water utilities. ○ Evaluation report to be provided to inform potential future DPE Water and WaterNSW programs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Update on the remote communications pilot. Detail provided on slides. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Engagement from utilities requires a dedicated resource. ○ IT issues need to be addressed early in projects. ○ Veolia Water uses this technology internally but does not currently have a commercial offering. ● Update on a pilot with Mid North Coast council water utilities in an assessment of asset management systems. Details provided on slides. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Utilities involved had no formal association through a joint organisation or alliance. ○ Effectiveness of asset management was best in utilities that showed executive leadership and commitment. ○ Condition data rarely used to inform renewal planning. ○ Little consistency between utilities approaches. ○ Potential for common resources but needs coordinated leadership commitment. <p>CNSWJO reflected that its experience was similar across member councils and supports the needs to executive support.</p> <p>A panel member asked whether the project considered relationship between utilities and NSW Government regulators, particularly whether historical engagement on IWCMs may have contributed to poor engagement and performance. Carmel Krogh responded noting that the responsibility for asset management lies with councils themselves. A panel member reflected on the need for good governance, and difficulty in gaining executive support in contexts outside of joint organisations and alliances.</p>
8	DPE role in skills and training – update

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The TWRRP team provided an update on the future role of DPE Water in training delivery and assessment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DPE Water will continue to offer existing training courses in 2023 to ensure competency based training is available. ○ DPE Water will engage with industry throughout 2023 on reviewing its training offerings. ○ This will include understanding LWU needs and preferences around what training should be delivered. ○ This may also include approaches to RTOs to support increased delivery of training where delivery is limited by trainers. • A panel member noted the potential for DPE Water's presence in the market to discourage private sector RTOs from entering the space. The TWRRP team noted the intention to complement and support RTOs rather than compete with them, and opportunities to move into areas of training not serviced by RTOs. The TWRRP team also noted the importance of the probity plan for the skills and training action plan that is current under development.
9	<p>Dividend methodology review – update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The TWRRP team provided an update on the project to review the dividend payment methodology. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review will look at the eligibility and calculation previously published in the regulatory and assurance framework. ○ Revised process requires publishing in the NSW Government Gazette and must be completed before caretaker conventions apply in March 2023. ○ Review will include targeted consultation and a focus group in 2022. • 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.
10	<p>Phase 2 of Town Water Risk Reduction Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amanda Chadwick gave an update on the potential for Phase 2 of the Town Water Risk Reduction Program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Understanding from stakeholders that work isn't finished, and stakeholders want to see work continue. ○ Support from within NSW Government, hoping to be approved by end of 2022. ○ Heard the need for further work in skills and training, dams safety. ○ Need for further review of regulatory/legislative issues not addressed by Phase 1. ○ Support from SAP has been vital in informing recommendations back to Government and opportunities for Phase 2.

Agenda item	Outcomes
12	<p>Other matters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chair spoke on the effectiveness of the SAP in this final meeting. The intention of role of the SAP as a sense checker, sounding board, providing direction and feedback, discussion of high level policy questions. Erin reflected that the SAP had been highly effective in this role, and thanked the panel members for their support and engagement over the last 2 years. DPE Water has committed to continuing these conversations into 2023. A panel member reflected on the engagement and culture that has been built over the course of the TWRRP, and encouraged all stakeholders to continue this direction. Graham Attenborough noted the desire to continue the partnership with LWU stakeholders. The Chair thanked other NSW Government regulators for their commitment and noted the continuing engagement between regulators. A panel member requested support for a consistent approach to LWUs meeting reporting requirements for EPA when impacted by flooding. DPE Water to lead engagement. Peter Marczan committed to raising the issue within EPA to get a clear position on this. Graham Attenborough offered his support. <p>ACTION</p> <p>DPE Water and NSW EPA to engage on clarifying EPL compliance monitoring requirements during extreme weather events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central NSW JO requested a focus by DPE on lessons learnt in incident and emergency management after the floods. Graham Attenborough encouraged Central NSW JO to contact him. <p>ACTION</p> <p>DPE Water to engage with Central NSW JO to understand and incorporate lessons on incident and emergency management into future work in this area.</p>

Actions arising from 16 November 2022 meeting

Table 3. Summary of actions.

No	Action	Responsibility	Due date
22.1	DPE Water to confirm stakeholder engagement mechanisms from 2023 onwards	Handed over to DPE Water – Operations Division for action	February 2023

No	Action	Responsibility	Due date
22.2	DPE Water and NSW EPA to engage on clarifying EPL compliance monitoring requirements during extreme weather events.	Handed over to DPE Water – Operations Division for action	February 2023
22.3	DPE Water to engage with Central NSW JO to understand and incorporate lessons on incident and emergency management into future work in this area.	Handed over to DPE Water – Operations Division for action	February 2023

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