

Town Water Risk Reduction Program—Outcomes and action items

Meeting 18 | 27 July 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 • Mr Graham Kennett, Kyogle Council • Mr Aaron Drenovski, Goldenfields Water • • Dr Annalisa Contos, Atom Consulting • Mr Brendan Guiney, NSW Water Directorate • Ms Meredith Macpherson Central NSW JO • Dr Katrina Wall, NSW Health Water Unit • Ms Melissa Gibbs, Office of Local Government • Mr Peter Marczan, Manager Technical Assessments & Advice, Environment Protection Authority • Mr Michael Blackmore, Director 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 Shaun McBride, Local Government NSW • Mr Patrick Lee, Local Government NSW • Ms Amanda Chadwick, Executive Director Performance, DPE Water (until item 6) • Ms Chen Chou, Director Water Reform Implementation Strategy, DPE – Water • Mr Graham Attenborough, Chief Operating Officer, DPE Water • Mr Chris Bowyer, Principal Performance Analyst, OLG • Frontier Economics – Mr Matthew Edgerton, Mr David Kontrobarsky, Mr James Key (until item 4) 	<p>Town Water Risk Reduction Program team members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Josh Tickell • Mr Glen Colley • Mr Sascha Moege • Dr Nanda Altavilla, • Mr Tim Stevenson • Ms Althea Kannane • Mr Andrew Fraser • Ms Sonya Cochrane (Secretariat)

Apologies

- Ms Jenny Bennett, Central NSW Joint Organisation of Councils (represented by Ms Meredith Macpherson)
- Mr David Kirby, Brewarrina Shire Council

Outcomes

Table 2. Agenda items and outcomes

Agenda item	Outcomes
1	Acknowledgement of country and meeting welcome
2	<p>Administrative matters</p> <p>Declarations of conflicts of interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clr Bill West – Cowra Shire Council – TWRRP IWCM Pilot • Dr Annalisa Contos – Atom Consulting – Griffith City Council IWCM pilot, Incident and emergency management project • Ms Meredith Macpherson – Central NSW JORegional approach to local water utility through IP&R
3	<p>Outcomes/actions from the previous meeting</p> <p>The Panel received an update from the TWRRP team on the outcomes and actions from the previous meeting. No items are outstanding.</p>
4	<p>Stage 1 alternative funding models - Frontier Economics presentation</p> <p>Frontier Economics presented a draft report on its analysis of the financial and operating performance of local water utilities.</p> <p>Panel members were encouraged to provide feedback on items in the presentation to Director Water Reform Implementation Strategy, DPE Water.</p> <p>ACTION ITEM 18.1</p> <p>Panel members provide feedback on the draft report Alternative funding model by 8 August 2022</p>
5	<p>Future partnership model between the sector and government agencies</p> <p>The department’s Executive Director Performance explained the department’s goals to continue to build the collaborative relationship with the sector that have been developed through the Town Water Risk Reduction Program. Internally, department is considering systems and structure that support open and constructive dialogue, that is regular and ongoing, and not just limited to projects. Capturing, retaining and using information provided by the sector is a key focus.</p> <p>GUIDANCE:</p> <p>Panel members supported the ongoing collaborative approach and how it has been undertaken under the Town Water Risk Reduction Program.</p> <p>A Panel Member noted their perception of the lack of internal coordination or sharing of information between departmental staff when working with local water utilities. The Chief Operating Officer noted the feedback and advised that he and the Director Water Utilities</p>

Agenda item	Outcomes
	<p>intend to increase their presence in regional NSW, but not detracting from the role of regional managers.</p> <p>A Panel Member also noted that in some cases, due to limited engagement with senior managers in the department, local water utilities don't know if significant issues are reported or escalated.</p> <p>It was suggested that the department continue to build relationships with Joint Organisations and consider an annual event, like the Annual Roads Congress, or those held by Regional Police, NSW Transport and Regional Health. Central NSW JO offered to pilot and assist in developing a collaborative approach to engagement, and suggested this be based on good will, communication and trust, rather than a high-level document.</p>
6	<p>Draft skills and training recommendations</p> <p>Information on the key challenges for skills and training was presented, highlighting the lack of trained operators in NSW and the high risk this poses to communities. Draft recommendations to address both supply and demand challenges, to increase the skills of existing operators and to attract more operators into the sector were presented.</p> <p>The TWRRP team confirmed quantitative analysis of workforce and training requirements for water operations in NSW would be published.</p> <p>GUIDANCE: A Panel Member suggested the reasons for the low up-take of training places for new water operations trainees should be identified in action plan and recommendations.</p> <p>A question was raised about TAFE NSW circulating training information directly to local water utilities, and not sharing it with Joint Organisations, and whether the department has any influence in this. The department will share this feedback with TAFE NSW.</p> <p>ACTION 18.2 Panel members to provide feedback on skills and training draft recommendations by 8 August 2022</p> <p>ACTION 18.3 Director Town Water Risk Reduction Program to share feedback on advising Joint Organisations of training opportunities with TAFE NSW</p>
7	<p>Implementing the Regulatory and assurance framework - Update</p> <p>The Regulatory and Assurance Framework commenced on 1 July 2022, with no significant differences from what was shared in the draft at the last Stakeholder Advisory Panel meeting.</p> <p>GUIDANCE</p> <p>A Panel Member asked for clarification on the ability for a local water utility to initiate an independent technical assessment as part of the review of departmental decisions, and specifically section 60 decisions, if they don't agree with the department.</p>

Agenda item	Outcomes
	<p>The Director Town Water Risk Reduction Program clarified that while the option to seek an independent technical assessment is available to the department when reviewing departmental decisions, this could not be initiated by a local water utility. However, local water utilities can request a review of a decision, and the department may decide to seek an independent technical assessment as part of the review in response.</p> <p>The Director Town Water Risk Reduction Program noted that the department's intention is that the review of departmental decisions would not normally be required to be used, although it is important that it is available.</p> <p>The Director Town Water Risk Reduction Program explained the new Framework has been designed to address and overcome the previous pain points of the section 60 application process. The new framework includes increased clarity and transparency on the expectations for an application, the department's assessment criteria and the assessment process. The department expects that the new framework will reduce the likelihood of disagreements between local water utilities and the department about proposed works applications. In addition to the ability for local water utilities to request a review of a departmental decisions, other preceding accountability and quality assurance measures are built into the new Framework, including internal peer review, publishing decisions and reasons for decisions, and the assessment 'clock'.</p> <p>The department has committed to ongoing review should improvements be identified.</p> <p>Panel Members suggested that the department makes it clear to councils and local water utilities that they have the capacity to request a review of department decisions.</p>
8	<p>Regional collaboration pilots - update</p> <p>Postponed to next meeting.</p>
9	<p>Other matters raised by Panel members</p> <p>The draft evaluation of the TWRRP Program is due to the department today. A presentation of the findings will be arranged for Panel members prior to the next Stakeholder Advisory Panel meeting.</p> <p>The Chief Operating Officer Water provided a brief overview of the new structure of the Water Utilities team. A presentation will be made at the next meeting.</p> <p>ACTION 18.4</p> <p>Meeting date arranged for the presentation on the draft evaluation of the Town Water Risk Reduction Program by Aither.</p>
10	<p>Next meeting and close</p> <p>The next Panel Meeting is 27 July 2022, and will include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional collaboration pilots - update • Water Utilities team new structure

Actions arising from 27 July 2022 meeting

Table 3. Summary of actions.

No	Action	Responsibility	Due date
18.1	Panel members provide feedback on the draft report Alternative funding model to Director Water Reform Implementation Strategy, DPE Water, chen.chou@nrar.nsw.gov.au	Panel members	8 August 2022
18.2	Panel members to provide feedback on skills and training draft recommendations to Principal Policy Officer DPE Water nanda.altavilla@dpie.nsw.gov.au	Panel members	8 August 2022
18.3	Share feedback on advising Joint Organisations of training opportunities with TAFE NSW	Director Town Water Risk Reduction Program	16 August 2022
18.4	Meeting date arranged for the presentation on the draft evaluation of the Town Water Risk Reduction Program by Aither.	Glen Colley	23 August 2022

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