

Town Water Risk Reduction Program—Outcomes and action items

Meeting 2 | 10 March 2021, 9:00 – 11:00 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 • Ms Rebel Thompson, Executive Officer Namoi Joint Organisation of Councils • Dr Annalisa Contos, Atom consulting (Consultant representative) • Mr David Kirby, Brewarrina Shire Council (LWU manager) • Dr Katrina Wall, NSW Health Water Unit • Mr Peter Marczan, Environment Protection Authority • Mr Michael Blackmore, Director Local Water Utilities, DPIE – Water • Mr Aaron Drenovski, Goldenfields Water (County Council member) • Mr Graham Kennett, Kyogle Council (LWU General Manager member) • Ms Erin Cini – Director Town Water Risk Reduction Program (Chair) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Sanjiv Sathiah, Senior Policy Officer, Infrastructure and Finance, LGNSW • Ms Melissa Gibbs, Director Policy & Sector Development, OLG • Ms Amanda Chadwick, Executive Director Water Sector Reform, DPIE – Water 	<p>Town Water Risk Reduction Program team members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sascha Moege • Nanda Altavilla • Josh Tickell • Padraic Gidney • Glen Colley (Secretariat)

Apologies

- Dr Richard Broome, Director, Environmental Health, NSW Health,
- Mr Luke Walton, Executive Director Planning Policy, DPIE – Planning & Assessment.

Outcomes

Table 2. Agenda items and outcomes.

Agenda item	Outcomes
1	<p>Acknowledgement of country/welcome</p> <p>N/A</p>
2	<p>Outcomes/actions from the previous meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Panel received a briefing on the outcomes and actions from the previous meeting. It was noted that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ action items 1 (program language) and 3 (program scope) are to be discussed in further detail later in this meeting. ○ out of session discussions were held with Annalisa Contos about program logic, and that the TWRRP team is working offline on program logic and will bring something to the group in the coming weeks ○ out of session feedback was provided by Mayor West on training requirements for newly elected councillors. However, it was also noted that further discussions are to be held between the TWRRP team and Mayor West with respect to what he wishes he had known (re urban water service management) when elected. Both will inform expected work on councillor training and support, in which Mayor West (on behalf of LGNSW) signalled an interest in being involved. <p>ACTION 2.1: TWRRP team to hold further discussions with Mayor West about the what he wishes he had known re urban water service management when first elected.</p>
3	<p>Recordkeeping and transparency of SAP meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Panel supported: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the keeping of meeting records through a tabled outcomes and actions document ○ the publication of the outcomes and actions document along with a summary version of the meeting presentation on the TWRRP webpage following every meeting. ○ the use of the “Mural” online collaboration tool as an informal way for Panel members to communicate feedback and ideas raised in meetings.

Agenda item	Outcomes
4	<p>Endorsement of SAP Terms of Reference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Panel endorsed the draft Terms of Reference subject to an amendment regarding obtaining the concurrence of the Panel on the record of meeting outcomes (ie. that the document is to be distributed to Panel members for comment before publication, with a nil response taken as concurrence). The Panel endorsed the TWRRP team communicating program progress to them out of session by way of email, as required. It was noted that the acronym SAP is confusing as it is used for other purposes (eg: Special Activation Precincts). The TWRRP team committed to using an alternate acronym/abbreviation (eg; the Panel). <p>ACTION 2.2: TWRRP team to update Terms of Reference to reflect the Panel's views on concurrence regarding records of meeting outcomes.</p>
5	<p>Discussion re program language and tone in communicating about the TWRRP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Panel received a briefing from the TWRRP team on out of session discussions held with Mayor West and feedback from LGNSW on this issue. Guest, Ms Carmel Krogh facilitated a discussion about this issue. <p>GUIDANCE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The TWRRP needs to be mindful to avoid bureaucratic and paternalistic language in its communications materials and dealings with the sector. The impact of government agencies' performance/capability on the management of service risks by, and performance of, LWUs needs to be more clearly acknowledged. <p>ACTION 2.3: The program fact sheet is to be updated by the TWRRP team and modified for less bureaucratic/paternalistic language. The TWRRP team to provide the Panel with opportunity to comment on the revised fact sheet.</p>

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Continued discussion regarding proposed focus areas

- The Panel received a briefing from the TWRRP team on the three proposed program focus areas not covered at the 24 February 2021 meeting.
- The Chair facilitated a discussion regarding the Panel's views on where to start and what to prioritise in the implementation of the Program.
- The following issues were suggested for prioritisation:
 - Improve clarity of roles of and coordination among co-regulators and set clear regulatory objectives for LWUs, including a coordinated/streamlined approach to setting regulatory service requirements for strategic urban water service planning (IWCM strategies) and technical approvals (s60) with a no-change commitment from regulators (e.g via MOU between regulators).
 - Considering the need of a policy on urban water service expectations in regional NSW that guides all the regulators,
 - As part of reviewing alternative funding approaches, program should also look into abolishing separate water supply and sewerage funds (reserved funds as per current Local Government Act) and creating a combined LWU fund in order to allow for more flexibility and an integrated resourcing approach.
 - More effective assistance in IWCM strategic planning; a more effective and efficient way of undertaking LWU water security analysis
 - Streamlining and improving the transparency of the section 60 approval process, as well as considering whether/how current approvals could be expedited.
 - Addressing complexities and costs associated with IWCM requirements.
 - Setting minimum standards for water access, and raw water quality) from ground or surface water sources for towns, especially in the western part of the state (service levels from state government as to what raw water security/reliability/quality councils can expect).
 - Promoting councillor awareness of, and training on their role and responsibilities for the management of urban water services, particularly considering the opportunity provided by the forthcoming local government elections (September 2021).

GUIDANCE:

- Lack of connectivity and coordination between agencies (co-regulators) is a fundamental barrier, and this should be addressed as a priority.
- Consider development of an overarching State Government policy on urban water service management and service expectations for regional NSW (agreed to by co-regulators) as a critical element of the NSW Government's approach to partnership with LWUs that is agreed to between regulators.
- Consider, as a first step before collaboration with the broader sector occurs, government agencies, especially co-regulators, collaborating among themselves to agree on service expectations and regulatory objectives for urban water services in regional NSW (and how to coordinate regulatory activities (noting the potential delay that might cause to broader sector collaboration on the regulatory framework).

Agenda item	Outcomes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leverage materials being developed by the Water Directorate and OLG to improve councillor and candidate understanding of their roles and responsibilities with respect to managing water supply and sewerage services.• Take advantage of recent changes to the Local Government Regulation requiring councils to provide induction training and ongoing professional development for mayors and councillors to raise councillor awareness on the role and responsibility for managing urban water services.• Address as a priority uncertainty regarding providers for operator training, which is reaching a critical point in the industry.• Explore, in the regulatory review focus area, the concept of amendments to allow councils to use a combined LWU fund (instead of separate restricted water supply and sewerage funds). <p>ACTION 2.4: TWRRP team to resend the slides relating to proposed focus areas to reflect updated information.</p> <p>ACTION 2.5: Commence discussions about pre-candidate and councillor induction training with LGNSW, OLG, DPIE Water and the Water Directorate.</p> <p>ACTION 2.6: TWRRP team to distribute the Water Directorate’s water literacy for councillors document to LGNSW, OLG, DPIE Water for comment before next meeting.</p> <p>ACTION 2.7: The TWRRP team will consider the feedback of the Panel regarding prioritisation and come back to the Panel at the next meeting with further information about options to progress early wins and next steps.</p>

Agenda item	Outcomes
7	<p>Initial discussion about collaboration and co-design (working groups etc)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair facilitated a discussion regarding collaboration and co-design approaches under the Program. • It was noted that the Panel needs to understand more about how working groups will work and who will be involved. <p>GUIDANCE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the program team consider applying the following principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Don't decide on an engagement approach until you know what it is you want to collaborate on and what you want out of your engagements - this will inform who you collaborate with, and how”. ○ Draw on good collaborative approaches within the sector, recognising that good collaboration is difficult ○ Key to making collaboration work is “not blaming everybody else” and admitting one’s own faults ○ Include all layers of local government into collaboration and co-design (ie. political and staff) since much change will be guide in a top down way. ○ Work with joint organisations of councils as an important mechanism for coordinating collaboration between councils. ○ Apply better regulation principles for some insight on how to collaborate well on policy ○ Use online forums and seminars with independent facilitators and subsequent targeted focus/working groups. <p>ACTION 2.8: Rebel Thompson to talk with Central West JO about good examples of collaboration and report back to the Panel.</p> <p>ACTION 2.9: The TWRRP team to provide further information to the Panel at its next meeting about how working groups are proposed to be set up and operate.</p>
8	<p>Next meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be held Wednesday 24 March 2021 – 9.30am start. • Meeting agenda to be advised 1 week prior to the meeting.

Actions arising from 24 February 2021 meeting

Table 3. Summary of actions.

Item no.	Action	Responsibility	Due date
2.1	Hold further discussions with Mayor West about the what he wishes he had known re urban water service management when first elected.	TWRRP team	By next meeting (24 March 2021)
2.2	Update Terms of Reference to reflect the Panel's views on concurrence regarding records of meeting outcomes.	TWRRP team	24 March 2021
2.3	Update/modify program fact sheet to include less bureaucratic/paternalistic language and provide this to the Panel for comment.	TWRRP team	24 March 2021
2.4	Resend the slides relating to proposed focus areas to reflect updated information.	TWRRP team	12 March 2021
2.5	Commence discussions about pre-candidate and councillor induction training with LGNSW, OLG, DPIE Water and the Water Directorate.	TWRRP team	31 March 2021
2.6	Distribute the Water Directorate's water literacy for councillors document to LGNSW, OLG, DPIE Water for comment.	TWRRP team	24 March 2021
2.7	Consider the feedback of the Panel regarding prioritisation and come back to the Panel with further information about options to progress early wins and next steps.	TWRRP team	24 March 2021
2.8	Talk with Central West JO about good examples of collaboration and report back to the Panel.	Rebel Thompson	24 March 2021
2.9	Provide further information to the Panel about how working groups are proposed to operate (particularly in relation to the focus areas that we want to start on earlier, coming out of today's discussion).	TWRRP team	24 March 2021

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