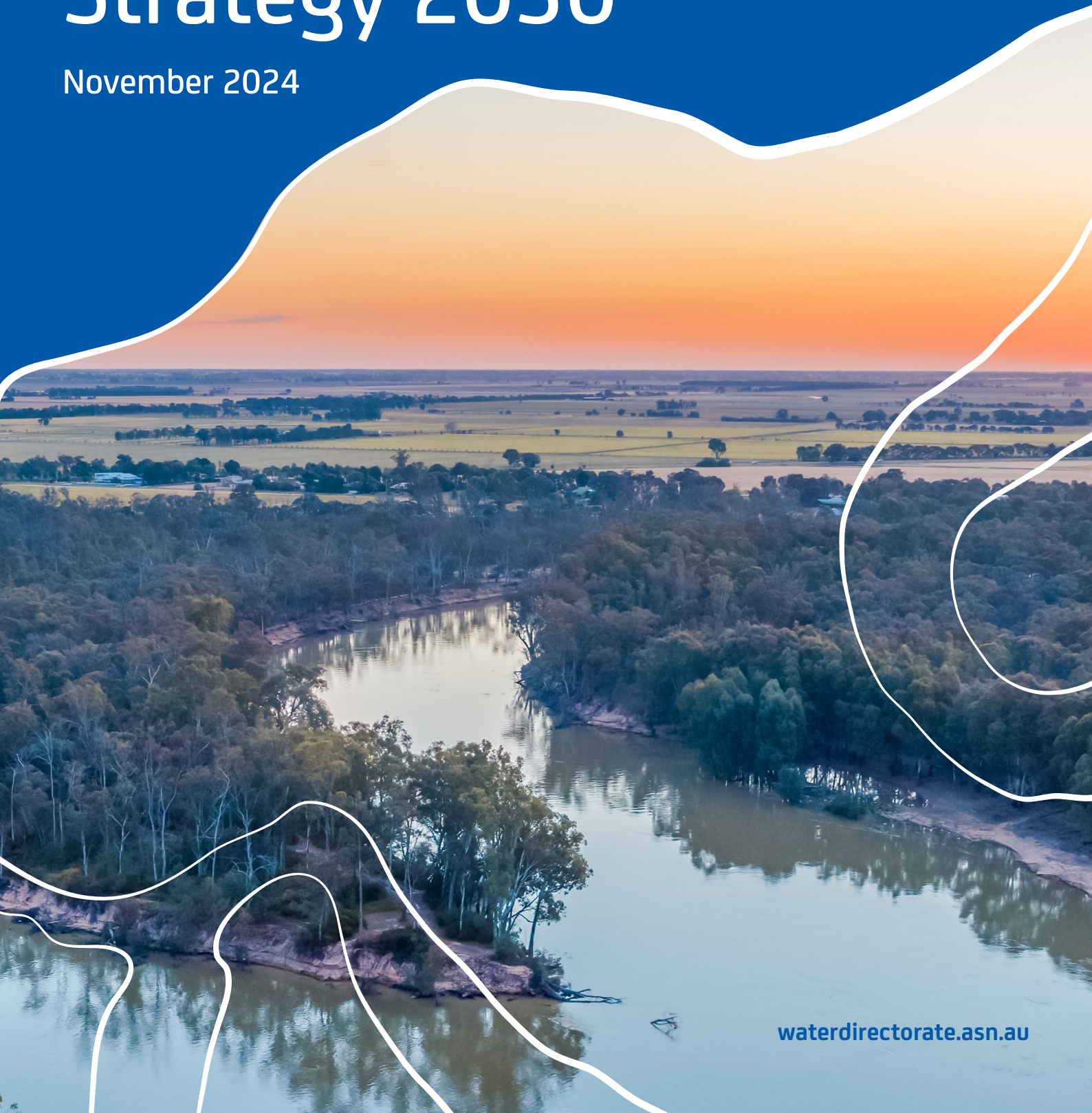




# Water Directorate Strategy 2030

November 2024



# Acknowledgement of Country

The Water Directorate proudly acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country across New South Wales, their rich culture and their connection to the land and water on which we rely. We pay respect to Aboriginal Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal people.



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# Our history

1999

The *NSW Local Government Water Industry Directorate* was established to replace the technical resources and advice previously provided by NSW Department of Public Works.

2002

Water Directorate Incorporated was created to form an incorporated association.

2007

Within 5 years of incorporation, Local Water Utility membership grew to over 90% of eligible Local Water Utilities across regional NSW.

2019

On our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, after extensive consultation we published a comprehensive 5-year Strategic Plan 2019–2024.

2024

Water Directorate is 25 years old and ready to prepare an ambitious new 5-year Strategic Plan.

“  
We are ready to prepare an ambitious new 5-year Strategic Plan.”

# Our members

Our 90 member Local Water Utilities:



**Manage** 380 water supply schemes and 300 sewerage schemes and 49 recycled water schemes.



**Serve** almost 2 million people across regional NSW.



**Own** \$32 billion in water and sewerage assets.

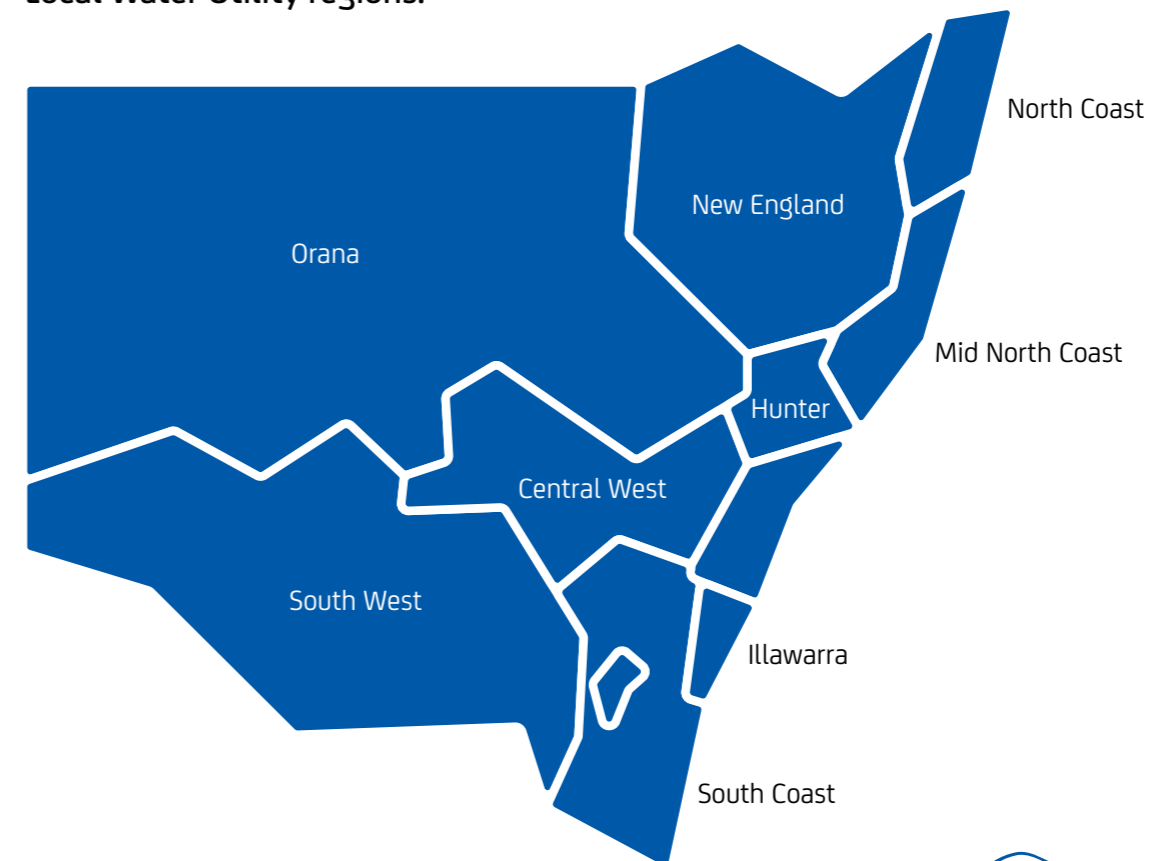


**Employ** about 2,400 water operators and 500 engineers, managers and support staff.



**Supply** 312 GL/annum water and treat 160 GL/annum sewage.

Local Water Utility regions:



**Our 90 member Local Water Utilities include:**

Albury City Council	Forbes Shire Council	Narrandera Shire Council
Armidale Regional Council	Gilgandra Shire Council	Narromine Shire Council
Ballina Shire Council	Glen Innes Severn Council	Oberon Council
Balranald Shire Council	Goldenfields Water County Council	Orange City Council
Bathurst Regional Council	Goulburn Mulwaree Council	Parkes Shire Council
Bega Valley Shire Council	Greater Hume Council	Port Macquarie-Hastings Council
Bellingen Shire Council	Griffith City Council	Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council
Berrigan Shire Council	Gunnedah Shire Council	Richmond Valley Council
Bland Shire Council	Gwydir Shire Council	Riverina Water County Council
Blayney Shire Council	Hawkesbury City Council	Rous County Council
Bogan Shire Council	Hay Shire Council	Shoalhaven City Council
Bourke Shire Council	Hilltops Council	Singleton Shire Council
Brewarrina Shire Council	Inverell Shire Council	Snowy-Monaro Regional Council
Byron Shire Council	Junee Shire Council	Snowy Valleys Council
Cabonne Shire Council	Kempsey Shire Council	Tamworth Regional Council
Carrathool Shire Council	Kyogle Council	Temora Shire Council
Central Coast Council	Lachlan Shire Council	Tenterfield Shire Council
Central Darling Council	Leeton Shire Council	Tweed Shire Council
Central Tablelands Water	Lismore City Council	Upper Hunter Shire Council
Clarence Valley Council	Lithgow City Council	Upper Lachlan Shire Council
Cobar Shire Council	Liverpool Plains Shire Council	Uralla Shire Council
Coffs Harbour City Council	Lockhart Shire Council	Wagga Wagga City Council
Coolamon Shire Council	Mid Western Regional Council	Walcha Shire Council
Coonamble Shire Council	MidCoast Council	Walgett Shire Council
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council	Moree Plains Shire Council	Warren Shire Council
Cowra Shire Council	Murray River Council	Warrumbungle Shire Council
Dubbo Regional Council	Murrumbidgee Council	Weddin Shire Council
Edward River Council	Muswellbrook Shire Council	Wentworth Shire Council
Eurobodalla Shire Council	Nambucca Shire Council	Wingecarribee Shire Council
Federation Council	Narrabri Shire Council	Yass Shire Council



**Our associate members**



**BECA** hunterh<sub>2</sub>O

Carmel Krogh



**NSW Public Works**

Trevor Seth

Mike Brearley

# Who we are



## Our mission

To provide independent technical advice to local water utilities and collaborate with government and non-government for better outcomes.



## Our vision

To ensure local water utilities deliver safe, secure and affordable water and sewerage services to regional NSW.

# Our key relationships

## Policy and advocacy



## Regulatory



## Technical

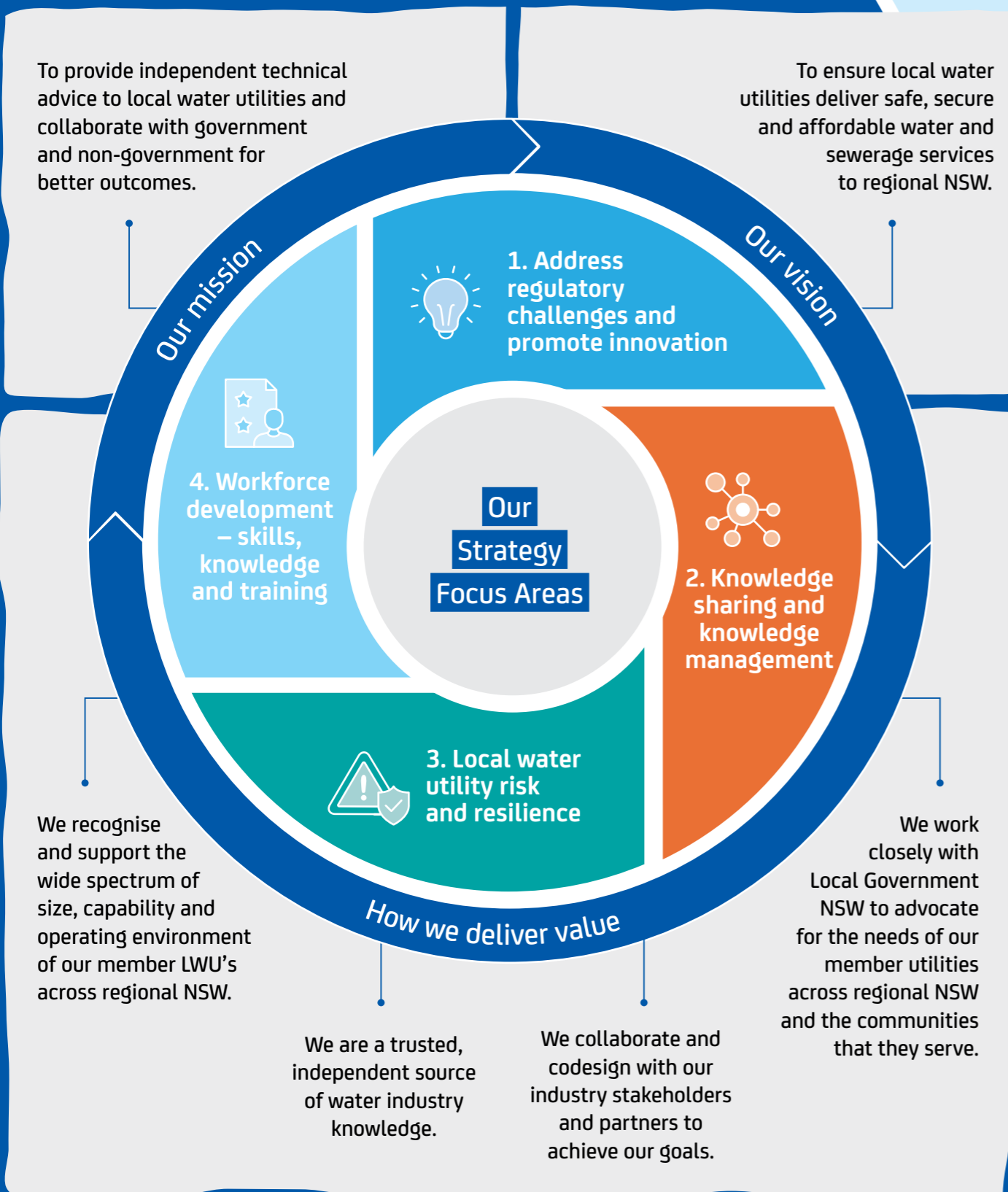


# Collaboration and co-design with NSW DCCEE

The strategic relationship between the Water Directorate and NSW DCCEE is critical to achieving our mission and vision. As the peak body for the NSW local water utility sector, we connect LWU challenges, risks and opportunities with DCCEE's various support programs for LWU's. These include:

- NSW Water Strategy.
- 12 Regional Water Strategies.
- Town Water Risk Reduction Program.
- Water Efficiency and Leakage Management Program.
- Safe and Secure Water Program
- Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program.

# Our Strategy



## How we deliver value





## Focus Area 1

Address regulatory challenges and promote innovation.

Strategies	Actions
<b>1.1 Adopting the Regulatory and Assurance Framework (RAF)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribute to continuous improvement of the RAF guidance, tools and techniques.</li> <li>Promote the use of the local government Integrated Planning &amp; Reporting framework for LWU strategic planning.</li> </ul>
<b>1.2 Strategic planning, IWCM and IP&amp;R</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review pilot strategic planning projects and contribute to continuous improvement and LWU adoption.</li> <li>Advocate for the State Government to complete water security modelling for regional town water supplies.</li> <li>Promote the establishment of an outcomes-focused standard for water security.</li> <li>Promote the inclusion of green spaces and water bodies in strategic planning for cooler communities, healthier lifestyles and more attractive places to live, work and play.</li> </ul>
<b>1.3 Regulatory reform</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote reform and improvement of LWU powers and duties under the Local Government Act.</li> </ul>
<b>1.4 Safe and Secure Water Program (SSWP)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribute to a review of the SSWP funding guidelines.</li> <li>Address the overlap in approvals between the SSWP Gateway review process and the Section 60 process.</li> <li>Contribute to improving the Eligible Risks and Issues List (ERIL) methodology and application.</li> </ul>
<b>1.5 Safe and healthy drinking water</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and share best practices for meeting Health Based Targets.</li> <li>Implement an awareness program to promote customer confidence in drinking water.</li> </ul>
<b>1.6 Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a Circular Economy strategy for LWU's.</li> <li>Advocate for a NSW Biosolids Management Strategy, covering the EPA guidelines and the NEMP for PFAS.</li> <li>Raise awareness of chemicals of concern in water and the atmosphere affecting LWU functions.</li> </ul>
<b>1.7 Dam safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote efficient, fit-for-purpose regulation for LWU owned dams.</li> </ul>
<b>1.8 LWU innovation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote Research and Development for regional and remote water systems.</li> <li>Promote innovation in technologies applied by LWU's.</li> </ul>

### Measures of success

- Opportunities for regulatory improvement are identified, communicated and implemented.
- Opportunities for improvement in the SSWP in the delivery of regional town water infrastructure projects are identified and implemented.
- Best practices in water quality management are compiled and shared, including approaches for community confidence, trust and transparency.
- Development of a Circular Economy strategy for LWU's.



## Focus Area 2

### Knowledge sharing and knowledge management.

Strategies	Actions
<b>2.1 Digital water utilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote a LWU digital maturity model.</li> <li>Prepare a digital water utilities strategy for LWU's.</li> <li>Prepare and support a cybersecurity awareness plan for LWU's.</li> <li>Consider the use of AI to reduce LWU staff time in data analysis.</li> </ul>
<b>2.2 Emergency and incident management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote After Action Reviews for incidents impacting services or people.</li> <li>Promote an all-hazards and all-agency approach to LWU incident management.</li> </ul>
<b>2.3 WHS improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the implementation of a WHS improvement program for LWU's.</li> </ul>
<b>2.4 Knowledge management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consolidate and maintain our Publications Library.</li> <li>Develop a knowledge and information management strategy.</li> <li>Expand our member publications library to include SOP templates and knowledge frameworks.</li> <li>Develop a video library of webinars and water professionals.</li> </ul>
<b>2.5 Online learning and micro credentials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an online, on demand learning platform to complement our publication library.</li> <li>Develop an online learning strategy to prioritise and implement learning products.</li> </ul>

#### Measures of success

- Development and implementation of a Digital Water Strategy/Roadmap.
- Development and implementation of a consolidated Knowledge Management framework and system for the Water Directorate.
- Development and implementation of an online learning strategy.





## Focus Area 3

### Local water utility risk and resilience.

Strategies	Actions
<b>3.1 Digital water utilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote analysis and approaches that identify and mitigate long term service level risks to water security, water quality and asset integrity.</li> <li>Support the development of risk reduction approaches that align with ISO 31000.</li> <li>Promote asset resilience assessments for climate risk (XDI).</li> <li>Develop a register of emerging risks for LWU's and promote awareness.</li> </ul>
<b>3.2 Emergency and incident management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the implementation of non-asset solutions to improve LWU performance and reduce risk.</li> <li>Promote adoption of ISO 55000 in LWU's through an Asset Management Improvement strategy.</li> <li>Focus on whole-of-life costs for infrastructure, plant and equipment.</li> <li>Identify critical and essential infrastructure for business continuity.</li> <li>Identify and share leading planned maintenance and renewal programs and practices.</li> </ul>
<b>3.3 Drought and water security</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve the connection between town water security analysis and the state's Regional Water Strategies.</li> <li>Promote climate independent solutions including water recycling and desalination.</li> <li>Review and update Drought Management guidance based on experience with the last drought.</li> </ul>
<b>3.4 Water quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote catchment based water quality warning systems for reliable drinking water quality.</li> </ul>
<b>3.5 Financial risk and affordability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote financial sustainability and effective governance.</li> <li>Promote a Community Service Obligation for Local Water Utilities.</li> <li>Raise awareness of Long Term Financial Planning and pricing principles for LWU's.</li> <li>Promote equity in financial hardship assistance between metropolitan and regional water utilities.</li> </ul>

#### Measures of success

- LWU's have risk management systems aligning with ISO31000.
- LWU's have asset management systems aligning with ISO55000.
- Water security risk is quantified, and solutions prioritised across regional NSW.
- Drought management guidance is updated based on lessons from the 2017–2019 drought.
- Catchment water quality risks are identified and monitored in partnership with NSW agencies.
- LWU's have updated financial plans and hardship policies in place.

# 4



## Focus Area 4

### Workforce development – skills, knowledge and training.

Strategies	Actions
<b>4.1 Workforce development planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support DCCEEW in the preparation of a workforce development plan/strategy for regional NSW to set direction and prioritise action, assigning roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>Promote workforce diversity and inclusion.</li> <li>Develop a toolkit and network to support council HR professionals and water managers to understand water operator training needs.</li> </ul>
<b>4.2 Shortages of water operators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider pre-employment training programs including School Based Apprenticeships and traineeships.</li> <li>Support the development of regional water operator training brokers.</li> <li>Support the development of regional water training centres.</li> <li>Support a migrant worker strategy for LWU's.</li> </ul>
<b>4.3 Shortages of trainers in water operations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a peer support network to support trainers through the Water Trainers and Assessors Network (WTAN) and reduce barriers to maintaining accreditation.</li> </ul>
<b>4.4 Access to high quality, fit-for-purpose training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote a minimum standard for water operator training.</li> <li>Develop support materials that contextualise training to regional NSW.</li> <li>Develop online and on-demand training materials where appropriate.</li> <li>Consider a complementary micro-credentials approach for specific skills to complement formal accredited vocational training.</li> </ul>
<b>4.5 Water skills shortages in Aboriginal communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program to address skills shortages in Aboriginal communities.</li> </ul>

#### Measures of success

- DCCEEW's Workforce Development Plan is developed with consideration of our member utilities needs.
- Our member utilities are well supported in the implementation of DCCEEW's Workforce Development Plan.
- Development of a micro-credentials strategy for the Water Directorate.
- Development of a water skills training program for Aboriginal people.



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