

ANNUAL REVIEW

2023 / 2024



WATER
DIRECTORATE

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.

CHAIR'S REPORT

It has been a privilege to continue as Chair the Water Directorate again this year and collaborate with local water utilities, government and non-government organisations. Collectively our Local Water Utilities (LWUs) provide critical and essential water and sewerage services to nearly 2 million people living and working across regional NSW.

It's difficult to think of any other critical industry that flies below the radar like the water sector. In regional NSW LWUs face additional challenges with maintaining water security and water quality, attracting and retaining skilled workers and financial sustainability which can impact the affordability of water and sewerage charges in regional NSW.

A 25-year success story

The Water Directorate celebrated its 25th Anniversary at a dinner in April, acknowledging the hard work of numerous Executive Committee members over the years. It was an appropriate moment to announce the creation of Water Directorate Life Memberships, with the first four awarded to the early Chairs Mike Rayner, Stewart McLeod and Daryl McGregor, as well as lifelong contributor to the water industry and former Deputy Chair Carmel Krogh. I acknowledge and thank each of them for their part in creating and building the Water Directorate into the organisation it is today, as the peak body representing local water utilities in rural and remote NSW.

Our second Water Directorate Annual Forum

In September 2023 we hosted the second Water Directorate Annual Forum with the theme Collaboration, Skills and Resilience, bringing together regional and remote water professionals from across NSW to meet with regulators, industry and partner water organisations. It's been great to see our Annual Forum grow from strength to strength. Thanks to Executive Officer Brendan Guiney and his team for their work in putting the Forum together and for all their hard work over the past year.

Collaboration and advocacy

My thanks go out again this year for the continued support of the Australian Water Association. In April, the AWA in partnership with the University of Sydney hosted a roundtable with the Minister for Water, Rose Jackson MLC, focussing on water challenges facing regional NSW.

AWA's Regional Water Champions program is going from strength to strength and is a wonderful success story. I encourage water professionals working or interested in water management in regional NSW to come along to a regional event to network and learn.

Review of funding models for local water utilities

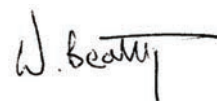
In the last year, the Water Directorate was pleased to make a significant contribution to the work of the NSW Productivity and Equality Commission, their Review of funding models for local water utilities. The Water Directorate has long campaigned for an explicit Community Service Obligation to be created for LWUs that are not able to fully recover the costs of providing water and sewerage services whilst meeting acceptable levels of service. We look forward to continued collaboration and the co-design of innovative alternative funding models.

Thanks to our Executive Committee and Executive Officer

My thanks as always to the current 18 Executive Committee members who have volunteered their time to help solve local water industry challenges, including Councillor Dominic King, and Shaun McBride and Anthony Luu of Local Government NSW, for continuing our ongoing, close working relationship on policy and advocacy in regional water.

Thanks to outgoing Deputy Chair Graham Kennett who has moved on to new territory after many years in local government. And welcome back Russell Deans of Bathurst Regional Council, replacing Melanie Slimming who moved from Forbes to Narromine Shire Council.

And thanks to our Executive Officer Brendan Guiney for his dedication and committed leadership and advocacy. On top of managing the Executive Committee agenda and carrying out our decisions, Brendan travels all over NSW to hear from and advise members, as well as writing submissions on behalf of LWUs, attending departmental working groups, and assisting country mayors. Brendan was recently commended by his local Member of Parliament for 36 years volunteering for Surf Life Saving: a fine example of his work ethic and community spirit.



Wayne Beatty
Chair, Water Directorate

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

It has been a privilege to support our Executive Committee again this year with their work for the Water Directorate. I'm always mindful of their fulltime commitments at their home councils and county councils, whilst as a committee we progress state-wide strategic needs on behalf of 90 Local Water Utilities in regional NSW.

The way the Water Directorate works is through in-kind input from our Executive Committee, distilling decades of knowledge to make a difference in water and sewerage services for regional NSW. Our Executive Committee members do the hard yards on behalf of the Local Water Utility sector. We are all very grateful for their service.

Town Water Risk Reduction Program

The Town Water Risk Reduction Program (TWRRP) entered its 4th year in 2024, the final year of Phase 2. TWRRP has required extensive input from the Water Directorate and our members. The Water Directorate's contribution has included participating in working groups, providing feedback to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water and making submissions on behalf of LWUs to ensure any changes to the regulations help to reduce duplication and smooth the path for improvements in regulatory processes. The Water Directorate continues to advocate for more flexible regulation as one size does not fit all local water utilities. This will create more room for innovation in the local water utility sector in NSW.

Support programs such as DCCEEWS's Regional Leakage management program, Advanced Operational Support, Skills and Training action plan, as well as the WHS uplift program are all evidence of innovative new approaches to local water utility support. The Water Directorate will advocate for the continuation and expansion of these successful programs.

Contaminants of Concern

Through the early part of 2024 contaminants of concern, especially PFAS, became an increasing focus and community concern, especially in relation to drinking water safety. The Water Directorate's engagement with the EPA's Biosolids Regulatory Review in 2023 was timely, in light of the recent discovery of PFAS contamination of water supplies in the Blue Mountains as well as the media attention that will place extra scrutiny on LWUs.

We will continue to share the latest updates on the emerging issues affecting the local water utility sector, sourced from trusted agencies and partners.

Pivot towards online learning

The Water Directorate has long held a valuable library of guidelines and manuals. Going forward, our intent is to ensure that online learning becomes the centre of what we do. We will continue to promote AquaCard and BrownCard, produced with the support and partnership of Qldwater. We will respond to our members' needs, being remote, regional and agile. Our work will integrate with NSW DCCEEWS's operator competency benchmark.

Thanks to my team

You may not know that we run a very flexible remote and regional model. I'm the only full-time employee at the Water Directorate. Through the support I have from Sarah on the south coast, Juliet in Sydney, Daryl in Albury and Jessica with me in Forster, we all come together for events such as our Annual Forum, but we mostly work remotely to support LWUs all around regional NSW. Our Annual Forum has grown stronger every year thanks to our team. I'm so grateful for how you have contributed to the growth of the Water Directorate. Thank you.

Strategy 2030

I am very pleased to have signed a five-year contract extension as Executive Officer and I look forward to finalising the new strategic plan that will guide our activities 2025-2030. Based on the feedback from members, Strategy 2030 will focus on maintaining water security and water quality, attracting and retaining skilled workers and financial sustainability which can impact the affordability of water and sewerage charges in regional NSW.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B Guiney'.

Brendan Guiney
Executive Officer

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2023–2024



Wayne Beatty
Orange City Council
Central West
Attendance 6/6



Clare Cam
Mid-Western Council
Orana
Attendance 2/2



Marnie Coates
MidCoast Council
Hunter
Attendance 2/2



Russell Deans*
Bathurst Regional
Council
Central West
Attendance 3/3



Derek Finnigan
Muswellbrook Shire
Council
Hunter
Attendance 4/6



Graham Gordon
Griffith City Council
South West
Attendance 5/6



Cameron Hawkins
Port Macquarie
Hastings Council
Mid North Coast
Attendance 1/2



Jason Ip
Riverina Water County
Council
South West
Attendance 5/6



Brie Jowett
Tweed Shire Council
North Coast
Attendance 6/6



Graham Kennett
Kyogle Council
North Coast
Attendance 5/5



Matt Kidd
Shoalhaven City
Council
Illawarra
Attendance 5/6



Bruce Logan
Tamworth Regional
Council
New England
Attendance 5/6



Gillian Marchant
Tenterfield Shire
Council
New England
Attendance 4/6



Doug Moorby
Narromine Shire
Council
Orana
Attendance 6/6



Melanie Slimming
Forbes Shire Council
Central West
Attendance 2/2



Trevor Sultana
Goulburn
Mulwaree Council
South East
Attendance 2/2



Wes Trotter
Kempsey Shire
Council
Mid North Coast
Attendance 2/2



Geoffrey Veneris
Goldenfields Water
County Council
South West
Attendance 6/6



Chris Witney
Snowy Monaro
Regional Council
South East
Attendance 1/2

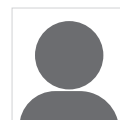
Appointed committee members



Cr Dominic King
LGNSW
Representative
Attendance 5/6



Anthony Luu
LGNSW Representative



Sean McBride
LGNSW Representative



Regional collaboration was a focus during the year

Orana Water Utilities Alliance organised a tour of Cobar filtration plant for member water workers, as one of their bi-monthly Operator Group and Technical Committee get togethers. OWUA's 13 member councils in western NSW value the opportunity to share common challenges and solutions for managing water services in the region.



The Executive Committee developed a five-year plan for the Water Directorate in 2019. Here is a snapshot of what we aimed for, what we achieved and what got in the way.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2019–2024: Did we meet our goals?

✓ Increase collaboration across the sector

Close collaboration with our regulators: DEECCW (formerly DPE, DPIE), NSW Health, EPA, Dam Safety

Annual Forum initiated in 2022 to bring water professionals together

Consult with and advocate for Joint Organisations: Central, Orana, Namoi, Northern Rivers and Riverina


Quarterly meetings with LGNSW and DCCEEW

Joint regional conference with Qld Water at Goondiwindi

✓ Capacity building for all LWUs, with a focus on smaller councils

Annual Forum on skills development for water sector

Adapt Queensland Water's Brown Card and Aqua Card mini credentials for NSW



WSAA Codes adapted for LWUs

Strengthened our partnerships with NSW local government Joint Organisations and regional water utility alliances - Central NSW JO, Orana Water Utilities Alliance, Riverina JO, RMAJO, South East NSW water managers

✓ Support LGNSW to advocate for the regional water sector

Multiple submissions to State and Federal Government on behalf of regional water sector

Advocating for improved water security for critical human needs in regional towns and cities

✓ Rethink governance arrangements

New Constitution approved 2022 to allow Associate Members

✓ Explore options for increasing revenue base, dependent on services provided



Associate Members joined the Water Directorate in 2023:






Carmel Krogh

✓ Improve reporting and benchmarking both of the Water Directorate and LWUs

Worked with BOM and NSW DCCEEW to review and rationalise national and state performance reporting to reduce the regulatory burden

Regional Leakage Management Program

Advanced Operational Support Program

Skills and Training Action Plan

EXTERNAL EVENTS THAT IMPACTED LWUs

TINDERBOX DROUGHT



BUSHFIRES



FLOODS



COVID 2020-2022

CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT POLICY AND PROGRAMS



Town Water Risk Reduction Program



Dam Safety legislation



Section 60



IP&R



Safe and Secure Water Program

CONTINUING THE JOURNEY

Our focus in the coming five years



WATER SECURITY



FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY FOR LWUS



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Towards 2030, the Water Directorate's strategic plan 2025-2030, is coming soon.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

INCOME	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Membership fees	639,449	599,503
Sales -Manuals	2,836	3,127
Investment Income	10,436	5,750
Sundry Income	8,112	1,928
Total Income	660,833	610,308
EXPENDITURE		
Accounting and audit	9,700	8,730
Advertising and sponsorship	33,171	22,963
Amortisation and depreciation	23,206	2,068
Bank Charges	542	589
Computer expenses	12,313	7,848
Conferences, travel and accommodation	33,490	18,162
Consultants and technical support	77,528	46,276
Employee entitlements	361,671	330,334
Executive committee expenses	5,043	6,023
Insurance	8,988	6,804
Membership fees	11,000	13,350
Printing, postage and stationery	18,637	7,316
Support service fees	28,500	36,000
Total Expenditure	623,789	506,463
Surplus for the year	37,044	103,845

Note:

Comparative figures have been adjusted to conform to changes in presentation for the current financial year.

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 30 JUNE 2024

	2024	2023
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash at on hand and at Bank	977,480	959,712
Trade and other receivables	522,916	455,545
Prepayments	42,952	21,639
Total Current Assets	1,543,348	1,436,896
NON CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant & equipment		
Office equipment	19,996	18,340
Accumulated Depreciation	(11,917)	(8,350)
Right of use asset	88,375	-
Accumulated amortisation	(19,639)	-
	76,815	9,990
TOTAL ASSETS	1,620,163	1,446,886
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	810,821	756,670
Lease liability	28,179	-
Short-term Provisions	49,573	35,066
Total Current Liabilities	888,573	791,736
NON CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Lease liability	39,396	-
Total Non Current Liabilities	39,396	-
Total Liabilities	927,969	791,736
Net Assets	692,194	655,150
EQUITY		
Retained Earnings	655,150	551,305
Current year surplus	37,044	103,845
	692,194	655,150

LIFE MEMBERS

Four people who have made an outstanding contribution to the Water Directorate were honoured with life membership during the 25th anniversary celebrations. Pictured left to right: Stewart McLeod PSM OAM, Mike Rayner, Carmel Krogh OAM and Daryl McGregor, with the Water Directorate's first Executive Officer Gary Mitchell. More detail about their contribution to the water industry can be found on the website www.waterdirectorate.asn.au



ANNUAL WATER FORUM 2023

This annual Water Directorate event gives our members the chance to network and exchange information, as well as hearing from regulators and water industry providers about developments and innovation in our sector.



MEMBERS BY REGION



Central West Region

Bathurst Regional Council
Blayney Shire Council
Cabonne Shire Council
Central Tablelands Water
Cowra Shire Council
Forbes Shire Council
Lachlan Shire Council
Lithgow City Council
Oberon Council
Orange City Council
Parkes Shire Council
Weddin Shire Council

Hunter Region

Hawkesbury City Council
MidCoast Council
Muswellbrook Shire Council
Singleton Shire Council
Upper Hunter Shire Council

Mid North Coast Region

Bellingen Shire Council
Coffs Harbour City Council
Kempsey Shire Council
Nambucca Valley Council
Port Macquarie-Hastings Council

Illawarra Region

Shoalhaven City Council

New England Region

Armidale Regional Council
Glen Innes Severn Council
Gunnedah Shire Council
Gwydir Shire Council
Inverell Shire Council
Liverpool Plains Shire Council
Moree Plains Shire Council
Narrabri Shire Council
Tamworth Regional Council
Tenterfield Shire Council
Uralla Shire Council
Walcha Council

North Coast Region

Ballina Shire Council
Byron Shire Council
Clarence Valley Council
Kyogle Council
Lismore City Council
Richmond Valley Council
Rous County Council
Tweed Shire Council

Orana Region

Bogan Shire Council
Bourke Shire Council
Brewarrina Shire Council
Central Darling Council
Cobar Shire Council
Coonamble Shire Council
Dubbo Regional Council
Gilgandra Shire Council
Mid Western Regional Council
Narromine Shire Council
Walgett Shire Council
Warren Shire Council
Warrumbungle Shire Council

South East Region

Bega Valley Shire Council
Eurobodalla Shire Council
Goulburn Mulwaree Council
Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional
Council
Snowy Monaro Regional Council
Snowy Valleys Council
Wingecarribee Shire Council
Yass Valley Council

South West Region

Albury City Council
Balranald Shire Council
Berrigan Shire Council
Carrathool Shire Council
Cootamundra - Gundagai
Regional Council
Edward River Council
Federation Council
Goldenfields Water County Council
Greater Hume Council
Griffith City Council
Hay Shire Council
Hilltops Council
Junee Shire Council
Leeton Shire Council
Murray River Council
Murrumbidgee River Council
Narrandera Shire Council
Riverina Water County Council
Temora Shire Council
Wagga Wagga City Council
Wentworth Shire Council

