

AG | WAT500064

21 November 2019

Jim Bentley
Chief Executive Officer – Water (Deputy Secretary)
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
GPO Box 5477
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Via email: jim.bentley@dpie.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Bentley,

NSW State Water Strategy – Request for Issues

On behalf of the Orana Water Utilities Alliance (OWUA) I would like to thank you for the opportunity to have input in to the development of a State Water Strategy for NSW, as per your letter dated 25 October 2019.

The OWUA is committed to providing a unified approach to the sustainable delivery of water supply and sewerage services and comprises a membership of 11 Councils, some of the smallest and most remote LWU's in NSW.

The development of a State Water Strategy provides an opportunity to establish a clear pathway for the future, clarify roles and responsibilities and increase accountability and coordination of agencies. Through increased stakeholder engagement there is the opportunity for improved collaboration through a meaningful and outcomes focused partnership approach to provide sustainable, affordable and resilient services for NSW communities.

There are also opportunities through the develop of the strategy to enable water literacy and customer empowerment, facilitate water industry networks, streamline consistent and relevant performance measurement and reporting systems and ensure the industry employs capable and certified operators and water professionals.

Some of the current issues facing LWUs throughout the OWUA region include:

Section 60 – there is currently an inconsistent approach to the approval method with no appeals process to resolve differing opinions. This leads to increased risks, lengthy delays for project delivery and places funding opportunities in jeopardy. A reduction in red tape would enable projects to be delivered in a sensible manner with communities experiencing the benefits.

Integrated Water Cycle Management (IWCM) – LWUs acknowledge the benefits of strategic planning but the current process requires simplification and a sense of proportion for smaller LWUs. It is essential to reduce the prescriptiveness in order to ensure IWCM strategies are delivered in a timelier manner with less expense and become a meaningful document. The current uncertainty around consultant capabilities leads to reduced competition resulting in lengthy delays and increased costs. There are also potential benefits to a regional approach to IWCM and secure yield analysis.

Safe and Secure Water Program (SSWP) – the current risk-based approach lacks transparency with no involvement of LWUs in the process, unknown criteria and outputs. The current requirement for LWUs to have a current IWCM in order to be eligible for funding is restrictive and has the potential to delay priority projects for the benefit of communities.

Interaction with other strategies – the State Water Strategy needs to align with other strategies and plans and the interaction between each needs to be clearly defined. Water Sharing Plans need to have greater recognition of LWU needs and the Regional Water Strategies currently being developed appear to have limited consideration of town water security and water quality.

Other issues/opportunities include:

- Robust leak detection coupled with opportunities to increase innovation, technology and customer engagement through installation of smart meters. LWUs who are using the technology are experiencing great results and the expansion of this would be extremely beneficial to ensure efficient water management, reduce costs and increase sustainability.
- Consideration of how Health Based Targets (HBT) will be addressed.
- Completion of the Code of Practice for Fluoridation of Public Water Supplies update – currently there is no timeframe.

Regional alliances such as OWUA enable LWUs to take a catchment and region based approach to water supply and demand management with the potential to deliver projects and infrastructure to deliver safe, secure and efficient water supply and sewerage services over the long term.

Thank you again for engaging with LWU's at an early stage in the development of the State Water Strategies. I look forward to the opportunity to continue the collaborative approach across all aspects of water management and ensure that LWU local expertise and knowledge is recognised and considered.

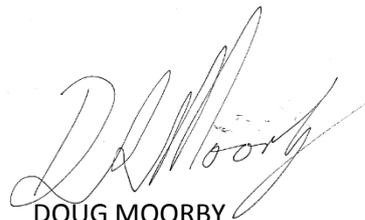
We must ensure that the current situation is not repeated during future periods of drought and that the work that is currently being undertaken remains a priority, even when the current drought breaks.

If you would like to discuss any of the details of this letter in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0447 092 639.

Yours Sincerely



ALAYNA GLEESON
PROJECT OFFICER
ORANA WATER UTILITIES ALLIANCE



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