

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

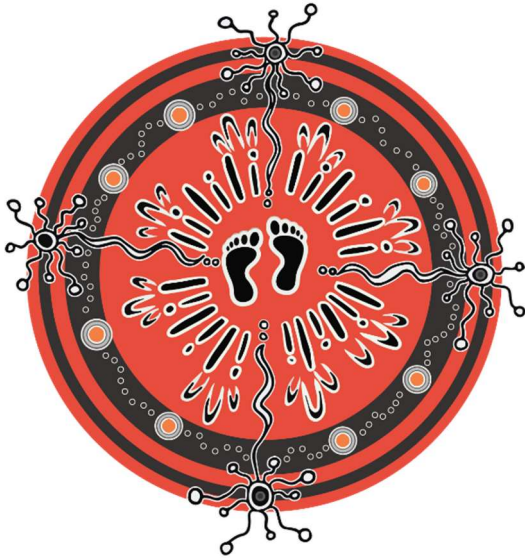
Water Group Business Plan

2024 - 2029

September 2024



Acknowledgement of Country



People and Community symbol.

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to Elders past, present and future.

We recognise Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to place and their rich contribution to society.

Artist and designer Nikita Ridgeway from Aboriginal design agency – Boss Lady Creative Designs, created the

Water Group Business Plan

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1 What the Water Group Business Plan does

As an agency within the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), the Water Group's Business Plan is part of the wider Department's strategic approach. The Water Group's Business Plan is linked to the DCCEEW Strategic Plan which sets out how, as a department, we work together to deliver on the priorities set by the NSW Government alongside core services and activities. It also identifies key enablers for our people, data and systems, engagement and partnerships.

The Business Plan sets out how the Water Group intends to meet our statutory functions, government priorities and strategic opportunities as identified in the DCCEEW Strategic Plan and the NSW Water Strategy.

Specifically, the Water Group Business Plan:

- identifies our key focus areas, to direct our efforts and prioritise our resources
- provides the principles that guide how we make decisions and deliver our work
- sets the framework for division plans and individual talent planning
- supports our Water Administration Ministerial Corporation (WAMC) submission to Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) to fund our statutory functions from 2026 to 2030.

The Water Group Business Plan is supported by divisional plans, detailed schedules of our more complex programs (see appendix 1), branch and project planning and My Talent Plans as outlined in Figure 1.

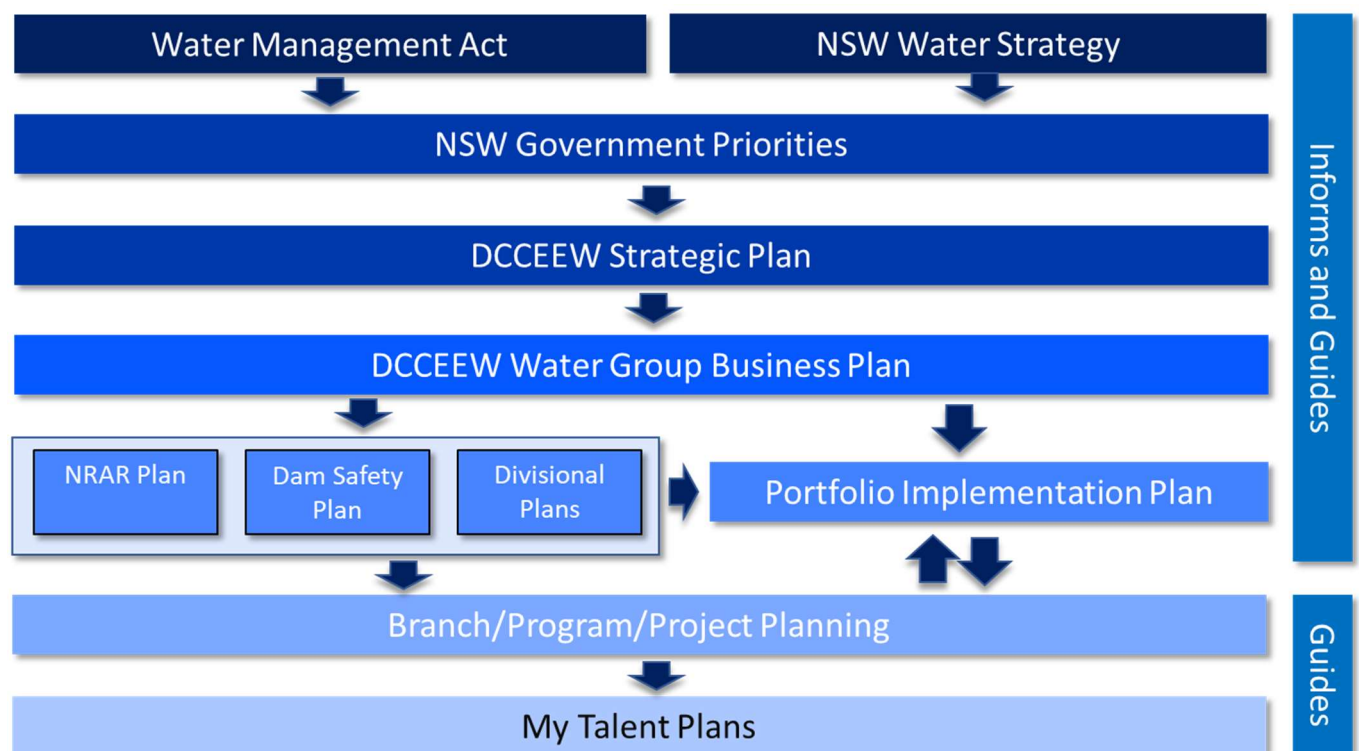


Figure 1 - Ecosystem of Water Group's commitments and strategies

2 About the Water Group

As the lead agency for the NSW water sector, the Water Group sets the rules for water use and trading and water policy for the state. We are responsible for water security and managing water resources in NSW, including adapting to climate change.

We develop strategic approaches to water management, including improving access to water for Aboriginal people. We work with the Australian Government and other Basin states to implement the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

We work with our colleagues in the Natural Resources Access Regulator to protect against water theft. Additionally, we collaborate with Dam Safety NSW to ensure the safety of declared dams.

We will fulfil our responsibilities by working with the community, our stakeholders, customers, partners and regulators.

2.1 Our commitment to caring for Country

We all live on Country. Each part of it – people, plants, animals, air, water, and earth – is living. Every day Country is caring for us, so we need to respect, care for, and listen to it. By doing so we can make better decisions and take better actions, which helps us stay connected to what nurtures and sustains us. No matter who we are or where we come from, a healthy Country – past, present, and future – makes for a healthy people, yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

2.2 Our vision, purpose & values

Our vision, purpose & values are drawn from the [DCCEEW Strategic Plan](#)

Vision: Thriving environments and communities, for every generation.

Purpose: Together, we take action and empower others to sustain and improve water resources.



Figure 2 - Water Group's Values

[Read the definitions of each of our values here.](#)

2.3 Our outcomes

The Water Group's outcomes are guided by the 7 strategic priorities outlined in the NSW Water Strategy.

- Build community confidence and capacity through engagement, transparency and accountability.
- Recognise Aboriginal peoples' rights and values and increase access to and ownership of water for cultural and economic purposes.
- Improve river, floodplain and aquifer ecosystem health, and system connectivity.
- Increase resilience to changes in water availability (variability and climate change).
- Support economic growth and resilient industries within a capped system.
- Support resilient, prosperous and liveable cities and towns.
- Enable a future focused, capable and innovative water sector.

These outcomes are the long-term goals we continue to work towards.

2.4 Our people

Our talented people are essential to the success of the Water Group. Our strengths include the breadth and depth of our knowledge, skills and experience across a wide range of disciplines, our collaboration focused on outcomes and the kindness we demonstrate. We are proud of our diverse workforce (Figure 3), which brings together a range of unique experiences and perspectives, enriching our team and driving our impact.

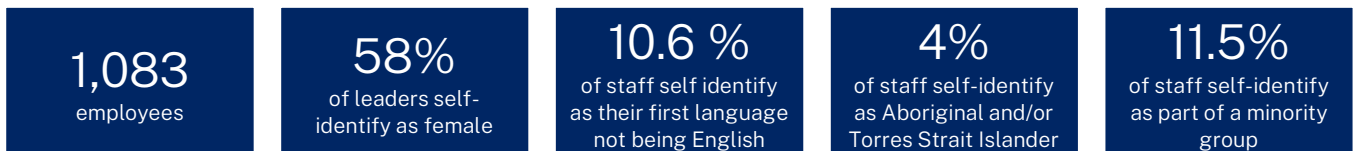


Figure 3 - Water Group diversity statics as at 31 July 2024

The annual NSW People Matter Employee Survey (PMES) offers valuable feedback from our people about their experience and perceptions of a range of workplace issues and practices. We consistently achieve high scores in areas such as job purpose and enrichment, risk and innovation, and job satisfaction.

The 2023 PMES highlighted the need to address staff burnout. In response, we are committed to improving communication about critical tasks and priorities to work towards increasing work-life balance, reducing burnout and improving overall well-being. Through the [2024-26 Safety Strategy](#), our leadership team are driving initiatives to improve the wellbeing of our staff by better equipping leaders to identify and manage psychosocial risks and piloting a process to measure and test staff wellbeing.

2.5 Our focus areas

To effectively manage the Water Group’s competing demands and balance what is achievable and sustainable for our staff, we will concentrate our efforts on priority initiatives within key focus areas. This means that we will be giving more attention in some areas of our work, but this focus will be balanced over time. Taking a project management approach will set us up for immediate success and help us prepare for the future by ensuring that we have the resources required to deliver outcomes.

For guidance on prioritising work when conflicts arise, please refer to section 4.4 Governance.

Focus area 1: Ensure delivery of our core statutory obligations including adaption to climate change

Priority Initiative	Target date	
1.1	Deliver and implement 155 packages of work for statutory plans for water sharing and floodplain management successfully and efficiently to meet statutory timeframes.	2026 to 2030
1.2	Develop a fit-for-purpose methodology to review minimum inflows for seven inland regulated rivers water sharing plans with a focus on embedding climate change considerations. Identify how this method can be progressively implemented across other water sources.	Jul 2026
1.3	Make changes to water sharing plans to improve connectivity across the northern Basin and flows into the Barwon-Darling at important times to meet critical downstream needs.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete detailed hydrologic and economic analysis to fully understand the benefits and impacts of the Connectivity Expert Panel’s recommendations. 	Dec 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Release ‘Pathway to improved northern Basin connectivity’ which will set out the actions we will take to improve connectivity in the northern basin. 	Jun 2025
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amendments to water sharing plans to improve connectivity commence. 	Jul 2026
1.4	Include numeric Long Term Annual Average Extraction Limits in inland water sharing plans.	2026 -2027
1.5	Implement floodplain harvesting regulation in final northern Basin valley (Namoi).	Jun 2025
1.6	Deliver Basin Plan commitments to Commonwealth through accreditation of final (4) NSW Water Resource Plans.	2025
1.7	Deliver Climate Action Plan priority actions focused on statutory water management obligations and key Water Group risks.	Jun 2025

Focus area 1: Ensure delivery of our core statutory obligations including adaption to climate change

1.8	Deliver and implement actions identified in the Water Administration Ministerial Corporation's Corporate Strategy to ensure the legislative requirements of the WAMC are effectively managed.	Dec 2026
1.9	Complete the review, remake, and drafting of core legislation and regulations as outlined in the Water Group Legislative Review Program.	
1.10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Water Licensing and Approvals Enhancement 	Jun 2025
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Remake: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Water Management (General) Regulation 2018</i> ○ <i>Water NSW Act 2014</i> ○ <i>Sydney Water Act 1994</i> ○ <i>Dams Safety Regulation 2019.</i> 	Sep 2025
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Statutory Review <i>Dams Safety Act 2015.</i> 	Nov 2025

Focus area 2: Drive delivery of the Murray Darling Basin Programs and influence the Basin Plan Review

Priority Initiative	Target date
2.1 Complete Northern Basin Toolkit Fish Passage Phase 1 projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Banarway Weir ○ Calmundi Weir ○ Louth Weir ○ Mt Murchison Weir ○ Toomelah Weir ○ Tilpa Weir. 	Dec 2026
2.2 Deliver SDLAM Acceleration projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Koondrook Perricoota ● Locks 8 & 9 ● Mid-Murray Anabranes ● Yanco Modernisation ● Yanga National Park ● Millewa National Park. 	Dec 2026
Deliver the next stage of Reconnecting River Country.	
2.3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Delivering the Murrumbidgee Final Business Case. 	Feb 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Delivering early works including replacing aging regulators at Werai Forest and raising infrastructure such as the Mundarlo Bridge near Gundagai and Mundowry Lane near Collingullie. 	Dec 2026

Focus area 2: Drive delivery of the Murray Darling Basin Programs and influence the Basin Plan Review

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing work to secure a corridor in the Murrumbidgee River system which will enable environmental flows up to legally allowable limits under the Murrumbidgee Water Sharing Plan. 	Dec 2026 (review Feb 2025)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progressing river operator authorising environment strategies to resolve operational, policy and legal constraints. 	Dec 2026
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progressing technical studies in the Murray River system to inform a future Final Business Case. 	Dec 2026
2.4	Review the management of water into and through the Menindee Lakes to improve connectivity between the northern and southern Basin.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a trial to protect environmental flows from the northern Basin through Menindee Lakes and develop enduring solutions as a result of the trial. 	Jun 2025
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to MDBA led review of the operation and management of Menindee Lakes. 	Dec 2025
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement ongoing procedures to actively manage environmental flows from northern to southern Basin, including any increased flows from northern Basin connectivity reforms, and recognition of Qld HEW. 	Jun 2026
2.5	Achieve NSW reform priorities for the Murray Darling Basin Plan by developing a negotiating position and engaging through technical and inter-jurisdictional forums.	Dec 2026
2.6	Delivering the remaining 3 regional water strategies from the original suite of 12 with the publication of the Lachlan, Murrumbidgee and NSW Murray Regional Water Strategies, including associated implementation plans.	Dec 2024

Focus area 3: Improve water security and urban water services for resilient cities, towns and regional and remote communities

Priority Initiative	Target date
3.1 Secure water supply for Sydney and the Lower Hunter through implementing the Greater Sydney Water Strategy and the Lower Hunter Water Security Plan, including expansion of the Sydney Desalination Plant. Note: decision on expansion of Sydney Desalination Plant late 2024	2029 to 2030
Working in partnership with local water utilities to better manage service risks, financial and skill priorities, and improve regulatory settings and processes we will:	
3.2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a response to the Productivity and Equality Commission's (PEC) Review of Alternative Funding Models for Local Water Utilities Report 	Early 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct an options analysis and determine the best course of action to implement the response to the PEC Report 	Jul 2025

Focus area 3: Improve water security and urban water services for resilient cities, towns and regional and remote communities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake the Review of the Regulatory and Assurance Framework for Local Water Utilities. 	
	To enhance water security and build resilient cities and towns, we will prepare to deliver regional water security projects by completing the following business cases:	
3.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Macquarie-Wambool Water Security Scheme 	Early 2026
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belubula Water Security Scheme 	Mid 2026
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tamworth Advanced Water Recycling 	Mid 2025
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tamworth Interconnection Pipeline and River Storages Project. 	Mid 2025
3.4	<p>Support delivery of NSW housing priorities with improvements in licensing, data management and customer service through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process redesign and digital investments to better target risks, accelerate approvals and realise cost savings Implementing reviewed licensing and approvals requirement for construction and ongoing urban infrastructure. 	Dec 2025

Focus area 4: Improve stakeholder trust by fostering innovation and ensuring transparency in water management

Priority Initiative		Target date
4.1	Implement recommendations of the Non-Urban Metering Review to accelerate compliance with metering requirements and address water users' concerns, aiming for 95% of water take to be accounted for by compliant metering.	Dec 2026
4.2	Strengthen the core enforcement and compliance powers of NRAR to improve confidence in the robustness of water management in NSW through the 2025 Water Enforcement Bill.	Jun 2025
4.3	Improve compliance and customer service by implementing the Digital Business Improvement Strategies 2025-2030, in partnership with WaterNSW and NRAR as WAMC.	2025 - 2029
4.4	Work in partnership with water sector agencies to ensure information, data and services are accessible and customer centric.	Ongoing

Focus area 4: Improve stakeholder trust by fostering innovation and ensuring transparency in water management

4.5	Ensure effective communications and engagement strategies are built into projects and programs.	Ongoing
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Focus area 5: Support delivery of housing priorities and renewable energy zones

Priority Initiative	Target date	
5.1	Co-ordinating whole of government implementation plan actions for provision of water and wastewater in Renewable Energy Zones, and as part of the broader Electricity Roadmap.	Dec 2030
5.2	Staged delivery of the Fish River-Wywanddy Regional Water Strategy to guide government decisions on water for future industries and urban water security in the Lithgow/Bathurst/ Upper Macquarie region.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consideration by NSW Cabinet of the preferred positions for the future of the Fish River Water Supply Scheme and special purpose access licences that are no longer required for their intended purpose. 	Dec 2025
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of final strategy and associated implementation plan. 	Dec 2026
5.3	Update the Greater Hunter Regional Water Strategy to consider water resilience for towns, industries, environment and Aboriginal people in the context of regional energy and economic transitions, using the most recent climate analysis:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise the review of the Greater Hunter Regional Water Strategy that assesses the relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness of implementation and to identify improvement opportunities to guide future planning and remake of the Strategy. 	Dec 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of the remade Greater Hunter Regional Water Strategy and associated implementation plan. 	Dec 2026

Focus area 6: Respect and embed Aboriginal knowledge to care for Country

Priority Initiative	Target date	
6.1	Finalise the Aboriginal Water Strategy.	Dec 2024

Focus area 6: Respect and embed Aboriginal knowledge to care for Country

6.2	Work in genuine partnership with the Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations (CAPO), under the Closing the Gap framework, to deliver outcomes for Aboriginal communities by completing the Closing the Gap Reimagining Water Delivery Plan.	Jun 2025
6.3	Strengthen Aboriginal cultural objectives in water sharing plans through partnership with Aboriginal Water Committees and delivering on Closing the Gap commitments.	Ongoing

Focus area 7: Improve the health and climate resilience of water sources, catchments and waterways

Priority Initiative	Target date	
7.1	Develop a whole-of-government model for integrated catchment management, focusing on water quality by aligning decisions in land use planning, water and biodiversity management in collaboration with other agencies.	Jun 2026
7.2	Determine sustainable extractions for coastal water sources	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Method development and review 	Mar 2025
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Method Pilot and review 	Dec 2025
7.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation program - sets out timeframes and approach to roll out across relevant coastal water sharing plans. 	Dec 2026
	7.3	Undertake an assessment of the implications of climate change and sea level rise for coastal water sources.
7.4	Monitor and report on delivery of government's commitments by all agencies in response to the Menindee fish deaths Office of the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer (OCSE) report.	2025 to 2029

Focus area 8: Enhance staff experience by prioritising wellbeing

Priority Initiative	Target date	
8.1	Implement the Water Group's 2024-26 Safety Strategy through annual initiatives for healthy and safe people, places to work and ways of working.	December 2026
8.2	Take action to address annual PMES results to foster innovation and enhance staff well-being.	Ongoing

3 Our organisation

The Water Group brings together specialists to protect the state’s water, environment, and cultural heritage. Each Water Group Division provides specialist capabilities and highly knowledgeable and experienced teams in support of our statutory objectives and the wider water community in NSW and Australia.

Our divisions work together to use our collective expertise and foster a culture of teamwork, aligning with DCCEEW’s Strategic Approach to collaborate, inspire and empower each other to do great work.

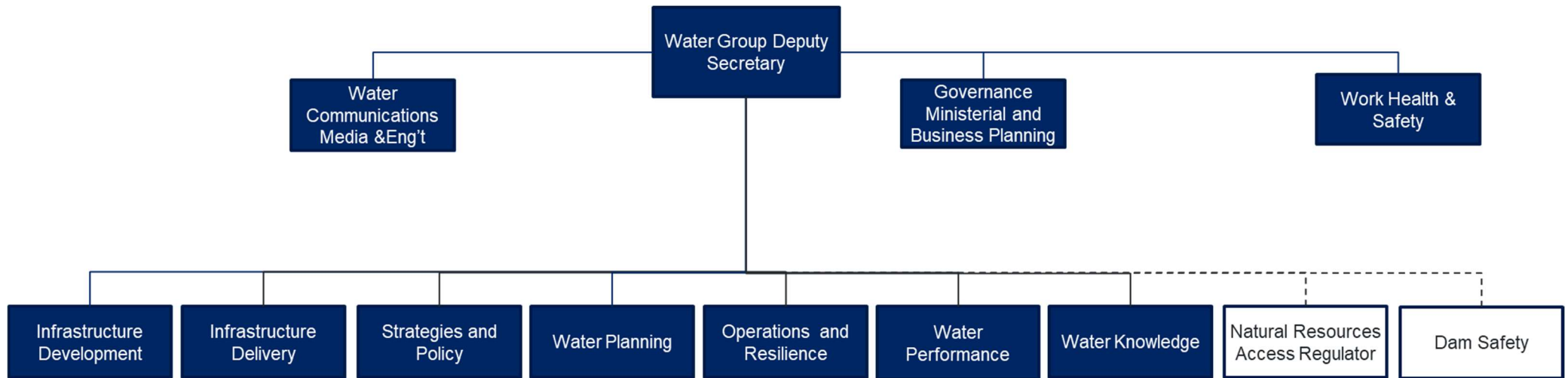


Figure 4 - Water Group Organisation Chart

3.1 Our stakeholders

The Water Group engages with a diverse range of stakeholders, each playing a crucial role in the management and sustainability of water resources in NSW. This section outlines our key stakeholders and the strategies we employ to engage and collaborate with them effectively.

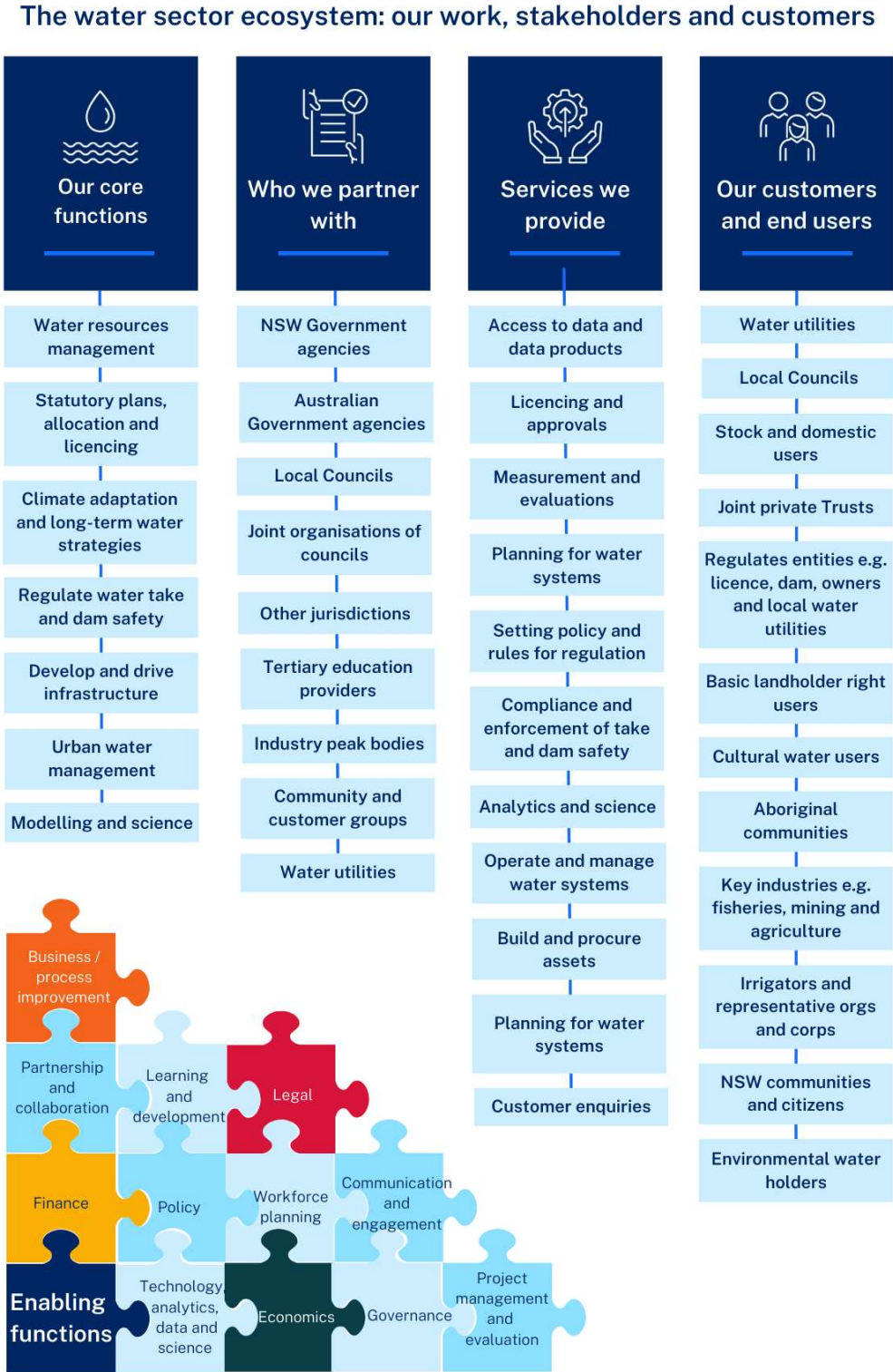


Figure 5 - Water Sector ecosystem: our work, stakeholders and customers

3.2 Our customers

The Water Group is committed to building confidence and capacity through engagement, transparency and accountability that aims to build trust over time with the NSW community.

Our customers have told us their priorities include understanding the impacts of climate change on water, ensuring ongoing reliability and security, emphasising the importance of groundwater and environmental water management, receiving value for money and affordability, and having confidence in decision-making and enforcement processes.

A key component in responding to the above priorities is becoming better at communicating complex water management technical and regulatory concepts to customers. We also need to demonstrate how customer feedback has been considered in the department’s decision making. Our goal is to understand the needs of our customers and to create an exceptional engagement experience.

The Water Group has recently launched a customer service charter, which defines our customers and outlines what they can expect of the group. The aim is to deliver excellent customer service and respond with accurate information, in a timely manner.

As part of our continuous improvement of stakeholder engagement and communications, the CM&E branch commissioned customer insight research. This research will be used to inform future project/program communications and engagement strategy and delivery.

3.3 Our partners and regulators

Aligning with DCCEEW’s Strategic Approach, the Water Group works across government and with the water sector to co-design and leverage opportunities.

We work in partnership with other agencies to ensure sustainable, secure and healthy water resources and services for NSW. Figure 6 breaks down the roles and responsibilities of each of the agencies.



Figure 6 - Roles and responsibilities of Water agencies in NSW

We also collaborate with other agencies to co-design and leverage opportunities, inspiring and empowering each other to deliver great work. These partnerships are detailed in table 1.

Table 1 - Water Group relationships with NSW Government agencies

Initiative	Working in partnership with
Deliver and implement 155 packages of work for statutory plans for water sharing and floodplain management successfully and efficiently to meet statutory timeframes (Priority Initiative 1.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Resource Commission • DCCEEWS BCS • Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) - Fisheries • DPIRD - Agriculture
Complete Northern Basin Toolkit Fish Passage Phase 1 projects (Priority Initiative 2.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPIRD - Fisheries • WaterNSW
Secure water supply for Sydney and the Lower Hunter through implementing the Greater Sydney Water Strategy and the Lower Hunter Water Security Plan, including expansion of the Sydney Desalination Plant (Priority Initiative 3.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sydney Water • Hunter Water • WaterNSW • Sydney Desalination Plant
Improve compliance and customer service by implementing the Digital Business Improvement Strategies 2025-2030, in partnership with WaterNSW and NRAR (Priority Initiative 4.3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRAR • WaterNSW
Work in genuine partnership with CAPO, under the Closing the Gap framework, to deliver outcomes for Aboriginal communities by completing the Closing the Gap Reimagining Water Delivery Plan (Priority Initiative 6.2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal Affairs • Crown Lands
Monitor and report on delivery of government's commitments by all agencies in response to the Menindee fish deaths (OCSE report) (Priority Initiative 7.4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPA • DCCEEWS BCS • DPIRD - Fisheries • Local Land Services • NSW Premier's Dept • Water NSW
Deliver the Aboriginal Water and Sewerage program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal Affairs • NSW Health

3.4 Our funding

The Water Group is funded from multiple sources. We work closely with stakeholders, NSW State and Federal Government, IPART and others to request and balance funding across our portfolio of statutory tasks and other programs. For the period of the Business Plan, it is expected that the focus of funding will be towards core legislative accountabilities, and key programs of work.

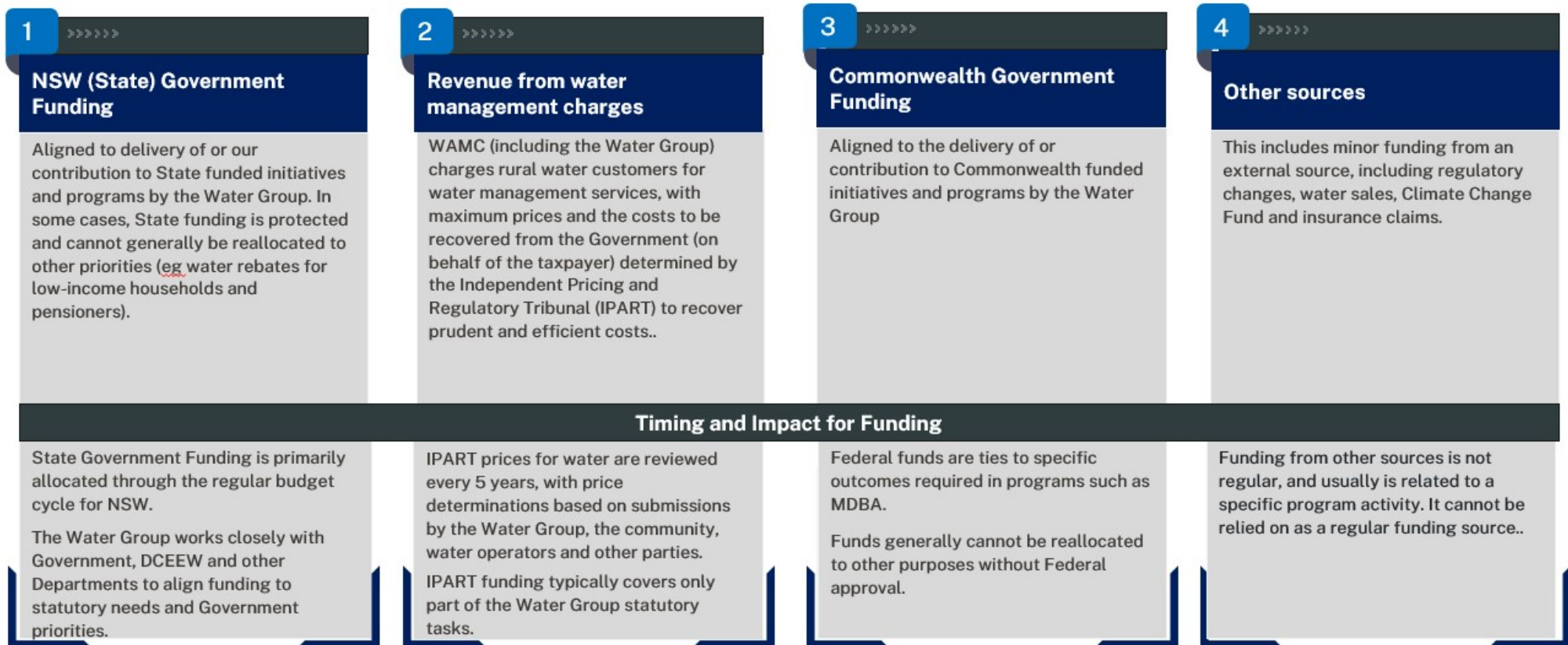


Figure 7 - Water Group funding sources

Further detail on the Water Group budget for coming years can be seen in appendix 2.

4 Our operating environment

4.1 Opportunities

The Water Group has an opportunity to make a meaningful difference for adaption to climate change and deliver outcomes for the community of NSW and beyond.

In alignment with our statutory functions, we can contribute to several critical areas.

- Sustain and improve water resources by delivering 155 statutory water sharing and flood management plans over the next four years including climate risk, cutting edge methodologies, modelling and science
- Meeting the housing targets in NSW with revised policy, licensing and approvals
- Water supply, services and capacity for regional communities to ensure they remain viable and productive including through the Town Risk Reduction program
- Aboriginal community and cultural water access through the delivery of the first Aboriginal Water Strategy
- Delivery of the Murray Darling Basin Agreement and delivery of crucial infrastructure and other projects.

Through the Business Plan period we will continue to work with other departments, agencies and stakeholders to ensure services and functions are delivered by the best placed organisation to ensure value for money and outcomes for NSW.

4.2 Fiscal outlook

The fiscal environment for the Business Plan period is expected to be constrained due to multiple factors including:

- the supply chain incorporating cost pressures relating to the highly competitive labour market and the higher costs of resources and funding
- availability of less funding from the NSW and Commonwealth governments for water projects and programs as an outcome of the retraction of economic activity and government receipts
- an increased reliance on IPART funding for core Water Group activities which requires significant efficiency returns
- budget labour costs for the period being significantly lower than previous years.

It is also potential that fewer (or no) new policy proposals will be funded in upcoming budget periods, and that WAMC funding awarded by IPART will be lower than the submission proposed. In this context, the Water Group will not start or continue any unfunded activities. Separate funding submissions will be made where further funding is needed. The funds that are available during the

Business Plan period will concentrate on the Water Group focus areas and the support of key government focus areas.

Full budget breakdown for the current and projected forward years are available at appendix 2. This appendix will be updated annually as part of the regular review cycle of this plan.

4.3 Water Group Risks

Based on the above fiscal constraints, the Water Group faces several challenges and significant identified risks. The risks and challenges summarised in Table 2 are considered the most significant anticipated within the Business Plan period. The management of the Water Group risks and challenges continues via its risk management approach with details of current risks contained in the Water Group risk register

Table 2 - Summary of risks and challenges

Internal and government factors in service delivery that result in risk and challenges	External Factors that our statutory responsibilities need to account for and deliver on
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of core statutory and regulatory tasks within a tightening funding environment. • Customer and regulatory pressures and expectations that DCCEEW Water needs to respond to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Litigation and audit risk. ○ Public trust risk. ○ Customer service and public health risks. • External pressure and risks that DCCEEW Water needs to mitigate in the future: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Obligations. ○ Wellbeing. ○ Grants governance. • High staff turnover in roles funded by short-term projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The climate is variable and changing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Climate change risk. ○ Basin communities' risk. ○ Shifts in viability and distribution of economies reliant on water. • Populations are growing and shifting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Variable water reliability risk. ○ Timely provision of water services. • Increasing competition for water. • Urban water security and water quality risk. • Catchment water management and security. • Economic and energy transitions with major implications for decision about water sharing

4.4 Governance

The Water Group is committed to the work-life balance and health and safety of our people. The Business Plan and its governance approach have been developed to support our people and ensure that we are all working on priority activities. The governance approach enables the delivery of our commitments while providing a mechanism to manage individual capacity and risk, so that projects are managed to balance both. This approach does not replace but is intended to complement the existing governance approaches within the Water Group.

Our governance approach is broken into 4 levels (see Table 3), and emphasises the quality delivery of our committed work, transparency in our decision making, and that our approach is clear for our people and delivery focused.

Table 3 – Levels of Water Group Governance

Governance Level	Description
Corporate	Governance functions managed at the centre of DCCEEW, that is, public interest disclosures, conflict of interest declarations etc.
Portfolio	Focusing on the rules, practices and processes for the direction, control and management of the Water Group - including the management of decision-making structures, frameworks and accountabilities, and boards and committees’ oversight.
Program	Focusing on governance of connected projects for successful management and increased opportunities for success.
Project	Focused on defining how the Water Group’s projects are planned, managed and implemented.

This approach aligns with NSW Government process, Executive Leadership Team delegations, and the existing executive meeting cadence to track and manage performance to the Business Plan. This approach will ensure we have:

- structured processes for approving new work
- management of changes within the business plan and focus areas
- a way to stop work that is no longer required or going to deliver the outcomes originally planned.

The Business Plan governance methodology has been developed as part of the wider Water Group governance approach and assists in determining work priorities.

Business Plan Governance Principles

There are 6 key principles for the governance of the Business Plan

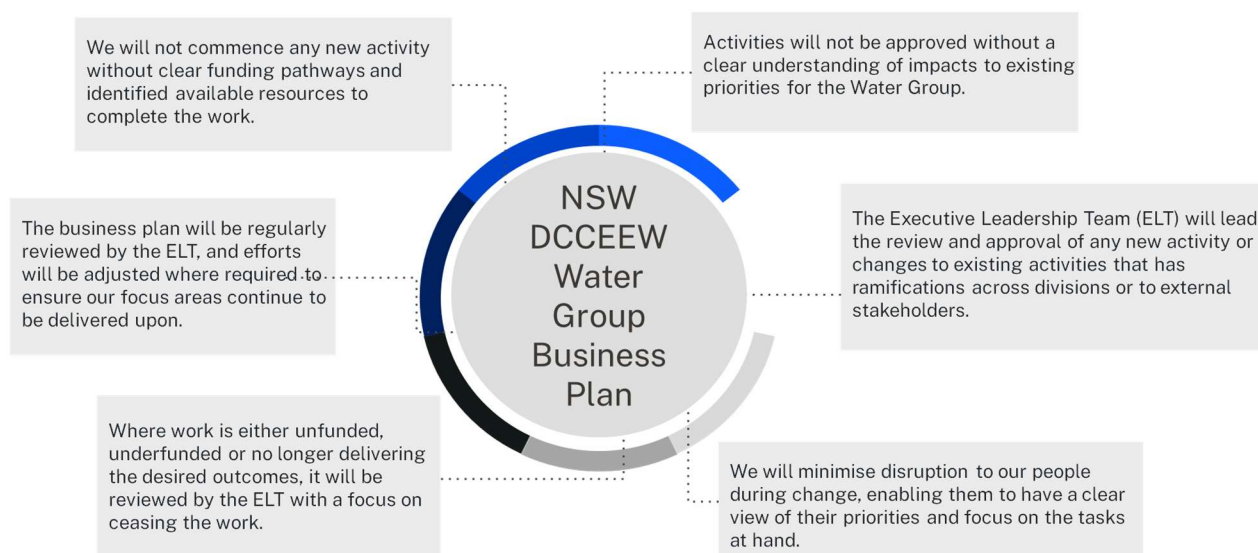


Figure 8 - Business Plan governance principles

The Business Plan’s governance will be led through existing Executive meeting cadence including the program review meetings, and a regular quarterly and annual review process. Further information is located at Appendix 3 – Business Plan governance further detail.

5 Glossary

Term	Definition
Activity	The projects, programs, or substantial operational functions (business as usual) we perform (excluding minor or routine tasks).
Focus area	Key themes that narrow down broad outcomes, providing specific guidance for efforts while remaining flexible to adapt to changing needs and priorities. These are the strategic areas where efforts and resources are to be concentrated to continue progress toward long-term goals
Government priority	Priorities set for us by the NSW and Commonwealth governments
Outcome	The long-term goal or result we work toward, aligning with high-level strategic objectives and expressing the overall ambition of the Water Group.
Purpose	What we are here to do
Priority initiatives	Critical actions that drive progress toward focus areas at a high level. These are the essential steps needed for us to deliver on our commitments and progress toward our goals.
Values	The principles and beliefs that drive behaviour and culture
Vision	Our long-term aspiration / goal

Appendix 1 - Integrated Master Schedule – Schedule of Delivery

An integrated master schedule has been developed to visualise the delivery timeline across the Water Group's most complicated programs. These are:

- Water sharing plans (including Operationalising climate change in water sharing plans)
- The Climate Change Program

Water Sharing Plans

There are 155 packages of work for statutory water planning projects (replacement, amendment, audit and review of plans) due over FY2026-2030, up from 28 in the current determination period. The increase is due to peaks in workload caused by timeframes set in the *Water Management Act 2000*, previous government decisions to develop the plans in batches, and the requirement to incorporate impacts of climate risk on water resource outcomes into statutory water plans and licences. This will provide information to water users about future water security, address Natural Resources Commission requirements, mitigate legal risk, including meeting litigation settlement terms agreed with the Nature Conservation Council, and address issues raised by the Auditor General of New South Wales.

As part of the development of the integrated master schedule a separate program of work was added as part of the business planning process to outline the project work and decisions required to operationalise climate change in the above mentioned 6 water sharing plans due to be replaced in 2026. This remains separate to the Climate Change Program which targets the approach to managing climate change risk and uncertainty in the way water is consumed and managed in NSW.

Climate Change Program

The DCCEE Water Climate Change Program addresses the department's understanding of and response to climate change (noted as a whole of business risk). Operationalising climate change in water sharing plans is the department's core climate change adaptation response to its statutory *Water Management Act 2000* obligations within the Climate Change Program. The program also covers identification of risk and risk responses to impact of climate change on agency functions. This is in line with the NSW Government Climate Change Adaptation Strategy which sets out four priorities to support climate change adaptation. The Strategy requires all NSW Government agencies to "identify climate change risks to their assets and services."

The integrated master schedule articulates the hierarchy of priorities and actions that form the baseline of achieving sustainable water resources for current and future generations. Regional and metropolitan water strategies are regional adaptation plans for water management in the face of climate change. These strategies set the direction and priorities for how water sharing plans need to respond to identified needs and challenges for each region considering climate change.

Links to schedule documents

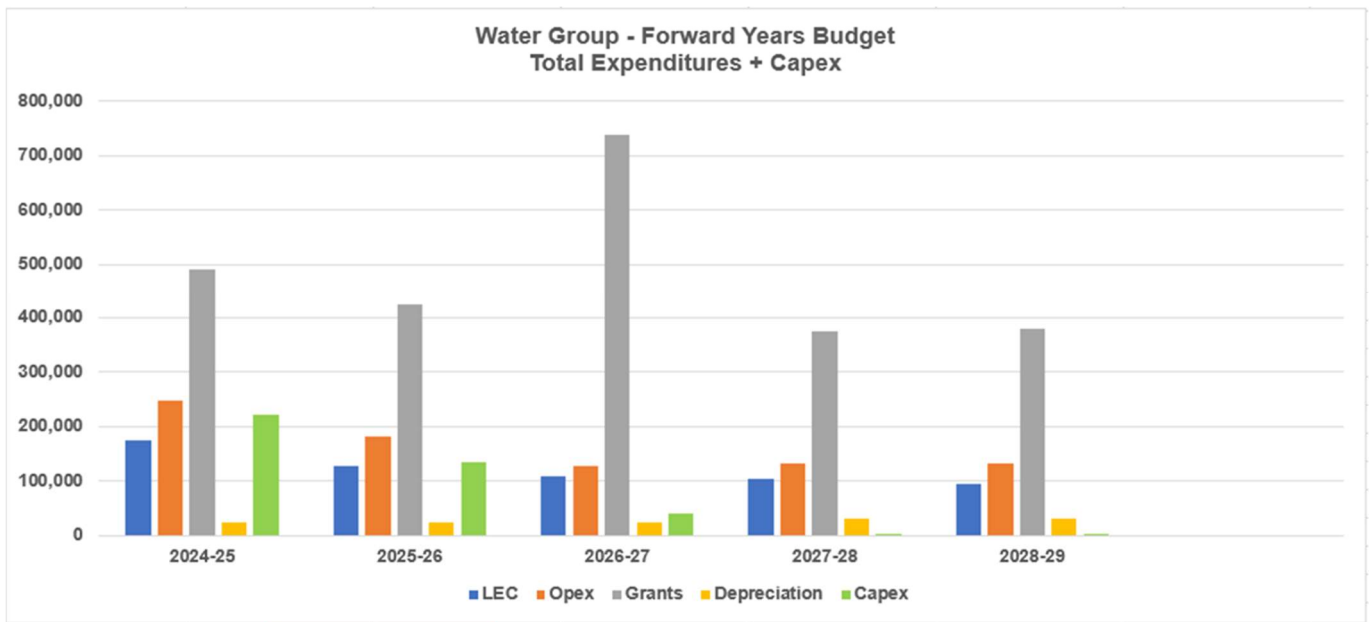
The integrated schedule can be found [here](#).

The Climate Change Program can be found [here](#).

Appendix 2 - Detailed budget information

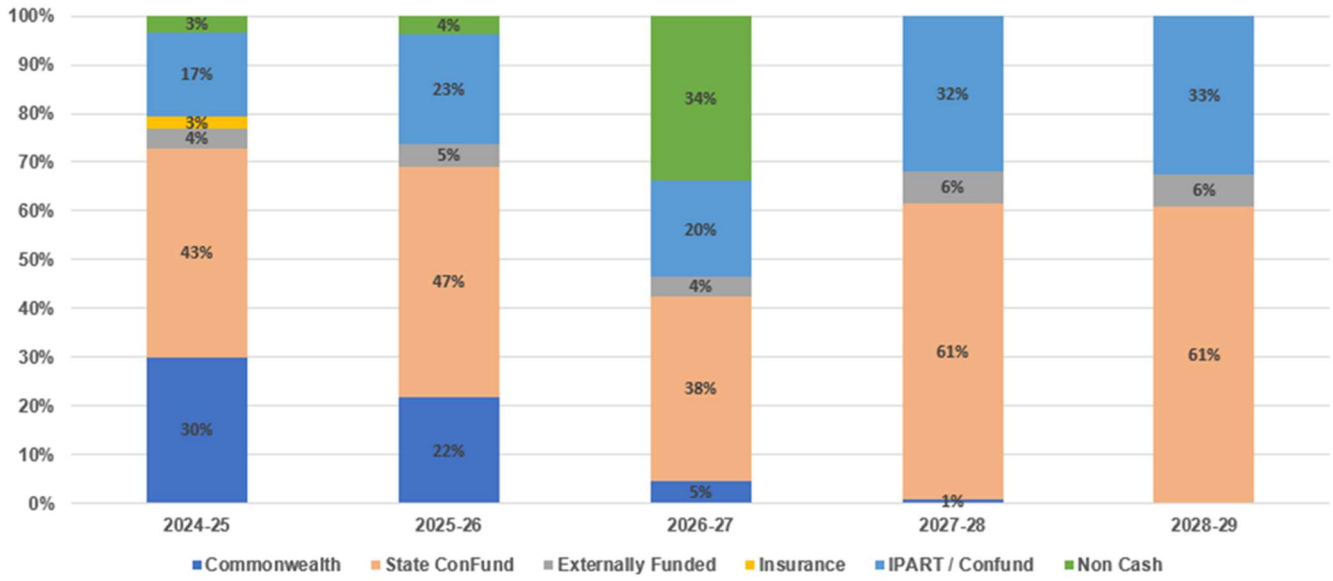
The general fiscal environment expected over the course of the Business Plan period is one of increased general cost of delivery through continuing challenges to supply chain, a highly competitive labour market, wage cost pressures and higher costs of funding. Significant funding reductions are expected from FY2024-2025 onwards.

The tables below provide a view of the forward years funding for the Water Group by cost category and funding source (noting that there is additional Commonwealth funding for specific works not included in this data). The Water Group will not commence or continue any unfunded activities. Separate funding submissions will be submitted should further funding be identified as needed.



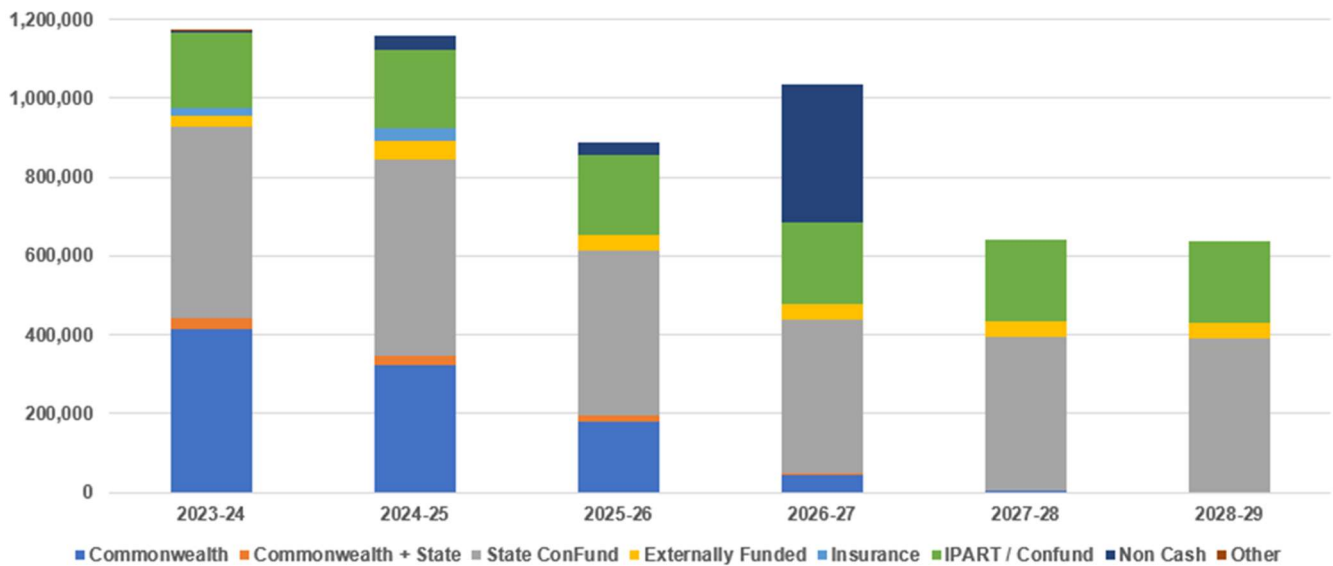
Cost Category (\$000)	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
LEC	175,402	126,786	107,996	103,171	94,956
Opex	249,007	181,716	128,007	132,981	133,539
Grants	490,944	424,287	737,985	375,515	379,647
Depreciation	24,080	23,982	23,994	31,554	31,441
Capex	221,100	135,062	40,734	1,042	1,042
TOTAL	1,160,533	891,832	1,038,716	644,263	640,625

**Water Group - Forward Years Budget
Total Expenditures + Capex**



Funding Source (\$000)	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Commonwealth	347,428	193,536	47,047	4,300	0
State ConFund	497,626	422,793	393,796	392,235	391,193
Externally Funded	46,038	40,927	41,209	41,328	41,056
Insurance	31,001	0	0	0	0
IPART / Confund	199,675	202,593	204,473	206,400	208,376
Non Cash	38,765	31,984	352,191	0	0
TOTAL	1,160,533	891,832	1,038,716	644,263	640,625

**Water Group - Forward Years Budget
Total Expenditures + Capex**



Water Administration Ministerial Corporation (WAMC) funding and delivery plans

The Water Administration Ministerial Corporation (WAMC) is responsible for planning and the management of water resources in NSW on behalf of the NSW Government. The Water Group, the Natural Resources Regulator and Water NSW provide these WAMC services for NSW.

WAMC (including the Water Group) charges rural water customers for water management services, with maximum prices determined by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) to recover prudent and efficient costs. For more information, see section 2.5 Our Funding. In conjunction with WaterNSW and NRAR, the Water Group have undertaken a process to estimate the cost of delivering WAMC water planning and management activities for the period FY2026 – 2030. In support of the Water Group’s submission to WAMC, one page delivery plans were developed to assist as an Executive Summary to the full submission.

These one-page implementation plans highlight some key information that each WAMC narrative covers in greater detail. These include:

- description of narrative
- key financial information
- alignment to outcomes or customer preferences
- key deliverables.

The one-page implementation plans can be found [here](#).

Appendix 3 – Business Plan governance

further detail

The Water Group Executive Leadership Team (ELT) will retain oversight of the Business Plan and its committed outputs and outcomes via an agreed series of meetings and reviews outlined in Table 4. This approach will also ensure that any new work can be achieved before it is committed to, through consideration of funding and organisational impacts.

Table 4 - Summary of executive meetings' cadence, purpose and outcomes

Regular Cadence	Purpose and outcomes
Executive Leadership Team Meeting (ELT) – every 2 weeks	Agenda includes project portfolio review, funding and HR. ELT members can table requests here for new projects, or to change or stop existing projects.
Executive Leadership Team (ELT) Project Deep Dive – Every 6 weeks	A detailed deep dive into selected existing projects. ELT members can table requests here for new projects, or to change or stop existing projects.
Business Plan Quarterly Review	Executive Leadership Team review and discussion of performance to Business Plan and actions or adjustments required.
Business Plan Annual Review	Executive Leadership team annual review of the Business Plan and reframing of required elements for the coming year. This could include financial components, focus areas and priorities. It is supported by a divisional approach to review their individual performance to business plan objectives.

Starting new work

During the Business Plan period, the Water Group will assess all new activity(s) requests, including both new projects/programs and other activities, to ensure it can be delivered effectively, is resourced and able to be funded. All new activities will be assessed for impacts to existing priorities, availability of funding, and resourcing required.

Any new activity that requires significant funding, disrupts delivery of focus areas, has significant stakeholder visibility, or requires significant resourcing across divisions will be provided to the ELT for visibility and approval where required. No new activity will begin without authorised funding, including seed funding for further planning.

Changes to current work

The Water Group recognise that circumstances of projects and other tasks can change. Our focus is to ensure rigour for change management and rescoping or stopping of activities to ensure transparency for our teams and stakeholders. Aligned to program and project guidance, changes to committed work that would significantly impact time, cost or quality of delivery, that have large impacts for stakeholders or our delivery teams, require ELT visibility and (if required) approval. This will ensure transparency and enhance our focus on delivery of quality outcomes.

The Water Group continue to work to ensure our people feel supported in project delivery and can raise suggestions and improvements for their own individual workload, team health, and other improvements.

This will be achieved through:

- appropriate project review methods (based on project tier¹) as agreed with the PMO
- team members being encouraged to speak with their project leaders, managers, or executive directors as needed
- existing DCCEEW governance.

¹ Refer to the Water Group Project Management Framework

Appendix 4 - Our legislative requirements

The Water Group must deliver to many different sets of legislative requirements in NSW and the Commonwealth. Whilst not exhaustive, the list below outlines the key Acts the Water Group has responsibilities to, a description of the Act and status.

NSW Legislation

#	Legislation	Description	Status
1	<i>Water Management Act 2000</i>	The Act is based on the concept of ecologically sustainable development and recognises the need to allocate and provide water for the environmental health of rivers and groundwater, while also providing licence holders with more secure access to water and greater opportunities to trade. The Act also establishes the Water Management Ministerial Corporation (WAMC).	In force, but with certain amendments not yet commenced pending further policy work.
2	<i>Water Act 1912</i>	An Act to consolidate the Acts relating to water rights, water and drainage, drainage promotion, and artesian wells.	Largely replaced by the <i>Water Management Act 2000</i> , with residual application to certain areas and activities. To be repealed on the whole commencement of Sch 7 to the <i>Water Management Act 2000</i> (to the extent that it applies to the <i>Water Act 1912</i>).
3	<i>Water Industry Competition Act 2006</i> (Except Part 3, the Treasurer)	An Act to encourage competition in relation to the supply of water and the provision of sewerage services and to facilitate the development of infrastructure for the production and reticulation of recycled water, and for other purposes.	In force
4	<i>Central Coast Water Corporation Act 2006</i>	An Act to provide for the constitution and functions of the Central Coast Water Corporation and for its establishment as a water supply authority under the Water Management Act 2000; and for other purposes.	In force – not active
5	<i>Dams Safety Act 2015</i>	An Act to constitute Dams Safety NSW and to confer functions on it relating to safety of dams and for related purposes.	In force
6	<i>Googong Dam Catchment Area Act 1975</i>	An Act to enable the proclamation of a catchment area for Googong Dam and the regulation of activities within that area; to provide compensation for certain persons injuriously affected by the regulations.	In force

#	Legislation	Description	Status
7	<i>Hunter Water Act 1991</i>	An Act to establish a State-Owned Corporation to supply water, provide sewerage and drainage services and the dispose wastewater in the Hunter region and certain other matters; to provide for the transfer of assets, rights and liabilities of the Hunter Water Board.	In force
8	<i>Natural Resources Access Regulator Act 2017</i>	An Act to constitute and confer functions on the Natural Resources Access Regulator.	In force
9	<i>New South Wales – Queensland Border Rivers Act 1947</i>	An Act to ratify certain agreements made between the Premiers of NSW and Queensland on the Severn, Dumaresq, Macintyre and Barwon Rivers and certain other waters (including underground water).	In force
10	<i>Snowy Mountains Cloud Seeding Act 2004</i>	An Act to facilitate cloud seeding operations in the Snowy Mountains area; and for related purposes.	In force
11	<i>Sydney Water Act 1994</i>	An Act to establish a State-owned Corporation to supply water, provide sewerage and stormwater drainage systems and dispose wastewater in Sydney and other regions and certain other matters; to provide for the transfer of assets, rights and liabilities of the Water Board.	In force
12	<i>Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (New South Wales) Act 2005</i>	An Act to apply the Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards Act 2005 of the Commonwealth as a law of this State, and for other purposes.	In force
13	<i>Water NSW Act 2014</i>	An Act to provide for State Water Corporation to become Water NSW, to abolish the Sydney Catchment Authority and transfer its functions to Water NSW; and to repeal and amend certain legislation consequently.	In force
14	<i>Water (Commonwealth Powers) Act 2008</i>	An Act to refer certain matters relating to water management to the Commonwealth Parliament; to amend the Water Management Act 2000 and other Acts; and to repeal the Murray-Darling Basin Act 1992.	In force
15	<i>Local Government Act 199</i>	An Act to provide for local government in NSW.	In force
16	<i>Native Title (New South Wales) Act 1994</i>	An Act about native title in relation to land or waters; and for other purposes.	In force

Commonwealth legislation

#	Legislation	Description	Status
15	<i>Water Act 2007</i> (Cth)	<p>An Act to make provision for the management of the water resources of the Murray-Darling Basin, and to make provision for other matters of national interest in relation to water and water information, and for related purposes.</p> <p><i>Note that the NSW Minister for Water does not administer this Act but has the primary responsibility of delivering water resource plans on behalf of NSW under that Act (and the Minister for the Environment delivers the long-term water plan on behalf of NSW).</i></p>	In force
16	<i>Basin Plan 2012</i> (Cth)	The Basin Plan was developed to manage the Murray-Darling Basin connected system and was passed into law in 2012.	In force