



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Joint Select Committee on Protecting Local Water Utilities from Privatisation

Supplementary questions: Alliance of Western Councils

1. How does the Alliance model support the sustainable delivery of water supply and sewerage services? What are the impediments to collaboration and how can these be overcome?

The Alliance of Western Councils is a grouping of 13 councils covering 32% of NSW. From Mid-Western in the East to Central Darling some 700 kms to the west we are a like minded group of rural and Regional Councils aiming to provide the best possible water and sewerage outcomes for our communities. The close knit relationship that exists within this group is the catalyst for the collaborative and cooperative manner in which we interact. It is built on relationships and the knowledge that we work better together rather than as separate entities. The collective knowledge is far greater than the sum of the individuals and the pursuit of helping neighbors is a significant focus of all our water staff.

2. Are there ways in which the Alliance model can be improved with the support of the State Government?

Absolutely . We have approached the Minister with a plea to fund a training facility in Trangie in the Narromine Shire very central to all shires within the Alliance. A training facility " on country "is exactly what is needed to further train our highly Indigenous populated water staff . Many shires will have very high proportions of Indigenous staff and to have a local training facility next to a caravan park and Swimming pool and with all facilities available will change the outcome of initiatives to attract staff for our utilities. The ability to train multi discipline work situations will enhance the value of the facility and bring about outcomes currently unattainable . The Balmoral Group have recently finalized a proposal for the Minister that showed an investment of as little as \$ 930,000 is all that needed to establish this facility and allow our members to move into a much improved staffing position across many disciplines.

3. What has been your experience with funding programs such as the Safe and Secure Water Program and Town Water Risk Reduction Program? What improvements could be made to these programs to benefit the Alliance?

Without these programs the situation across western NSW would be dire. During the 2017-2019 drought which was the most intense dry period in my lifetime we saw 31 communities on the verge of having NO WATER. NO WATER AT ALL. That was how serious it became . The fact that grant funding from these programs has pretty much remained static at approx. \$125 mill p.a. is one very limiting factor and with the escalating costs we are seeing far less impact now than previously. I drove out of Sydney last Sunday morning and saw one road sign announcing to passing motorists that the works they were about to drive through would cost \$200 mill. Until we see a very significant improvement in funding the people of this vast area can expect to continue to be treated as second class citizens when it comes to water (and health and education and to crime rates and policing numbers) . A massive injection of funds is overdue and should it ever eventuate then please allow

the Shires with their local knowledge to undertake the necessary works in the absence of state officials or infrastructure builders. So please, no bureaucracy and no Public Works.

