



## PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Joint Select Committee on Protecting Local Water Utilities from Privatisation

28 March 2024

### MEDIA RELEASE

## Safeguarding local water utilities in NSW

The Joint Select Committee on Protecting Local Water Utilities from Privatisation today tabled its final report, which includes 13 recommendations to the NSW Government.

The Committee was established to look into ways of protecting local water utilities (LWUs) from privatisation, amalgamations and forced sell-offs after NSW Parliament passed the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023, which prevents the privatisation of Sydney Water and Hunter Water.

Committee Chair, the Hon Stephen Lawrence MLC, said that inquiry participants overwhelmingly opposed privatisation of LWUs and their assets and supported legislative protections against privatisation.

"Every citizen in our State, regardless of where they live, deserves certainty in terms of the future of their water supply," Mr Lawrence said.

"That's why the Committee recommends that the NSW Government develop new legislation to protect local water utilities from privatisation, forced amalgamations and sell-offs. Any new legislation to protect LWUs must not impact their ability to engage private sector services when needed and should be developed in consultation with the sector."

The Committee received 34 submissions from local councils, county councils, joint organisations, member associations, government agencies and members of the public. Members also heard from 45 individual witnesses during public hearings held in Sydney, Wagga Wagga and Dubbo.

"Although this inquiry was primarily focused on protections against privatisation, we also heard considerable evidence concerning the financial and strategic support provided to LWUs and how this impacts their capacity to manage risks sustainably," Mr Lawrence said.

"Regional communities in NSW face serious risks associated with water scarcity and poor water quality. These risks are worsening as climate change intensifies."

"Our report makes a number of recommendations that aim to address some of the key challenges and opportunities currently facing LWUs in NSW."

"On behalf of the Committee, I thank everyone who made a submission or appeared as a witness at one of our public hearings. We hope this report and its recommendations will translate into improved outcomes and greater certainty for LWUs across NSW."

The report can be found on the inquiry [webpage](#).

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