

**Submission
No 34**

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON PROTECTING LOCAL WATER UTILITIES
FROM PRIVATISATION**

Organisation: Bland Shire Council

Date Received: 13 November 2023

4 October 2023

The Chair
Select Committee on Protecting Local Water Utilities from Privatisation
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Attn: The Hon Stephen Lawrence MLC

Dear Mr Lawrence

RE: Joint Select Committee – Local Water Utilities

Council wishes to thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Select Committee in regard to Protecting Local Water Utilities from Privatisation.

Bland Shire Council is a NSW Local Government Authority and Local Government Water Utility providing sewerage services to the communities of Wyalong/West Wyalong, Ungarie and Barmedman. Council is also a member of the Goldenfields Water County Council (GWCC) being the water supply authority for many Council's in the northern Riverina.

There are 92 Local Government owned Water Utilities in NSW including approximately 380 water supply schemes and 300 sewerage schemes that serve 1.9 million people in regional NSW. Of these there are currently 4 County Councils. These assets were valued at \$30 Billion (2019) with 312 GL/annum of water supplied and 160 GL/annum of sewage treated.

Back in the 1990's the NSW Government stripped electricity assets from local communities and sold them off, which "set the scene" to explore the idea of selling off water utilities. Regional water and sewerage utilities are controlled by local government, and been under threat for over 20 years, including most recently in 2007.

Bland Shire supports legislative and institutional arrangements that maintain local government responsibility for the operation and management of water supply and sewerage services and infrastructure in regional NSW.

Any recommendations to aggregate regional local water utilities is not supported as a "one size fits all" approach to providing local water utility services. Privatisation is not the solution to under investment, which is largely a condition resulting from a community's ability to pay for water utility services and is impractical due to the spatial diversity and socio-economic variability across regional NSW.

Local government water utilities are able to provide local community specific approaches to water supply and sewerage management delivering optimal outcomes for their communities.

Lower prices provided by local government water utilities reflect the greater efficiencies from the economies of scale achieved within the local government environment.

The removal of sewerage functions from Bland Shire would have significant impacts on the financial sustainability.

Council refers you to the detailed submissions made by Goldenfields Water and REROC for further detail.

Should you require any further information please do not hesitate in contacting me,

Yours faithfully



Grant Baker
General Manager