

INQUIRY INTO INTEGRITY, EFFICACY AND VALUE FOR MONEY OF NSW GOVERNMENT GRANT PROGRAMS

Organisation: NSW Joint Organisations

Date Received: 22 August 2020

NSW JOINT ORGANISATIONS RESPONSE TO THE

INQUIRY INTO THE INTEGRITY, EFFICACY AND VALUE FOR MONEY OF NSW GOVERNMENT GRANT PROGRAMS (THE INQUIRY)

21 AUGUST 2020



21 August 2020

Mr David Shoebridge MLC
Committee Chair
Public Accountability Committee
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

To whom it may concern,

Re: Inquiry into the integrity, efficacy and value for money of NSW Government grant programs (the Inquiry)

The Chairs of the 13 Joint Organisations across regional NSW thank you for the opportunity to make submission to the Inquiry into the integrity, efficacy and value for money of NSW Government grant programs.

We understand the terms of reference to be:

1. That the Public Accountability Committee inquire into and report on the integrity, efficacy and value for money of NSW Government grant programs, and in particular:
 - a. the range and availability of funding programs, including but not limited to:
 - i. discretionary grants funds such as the Premier's Discretionary Fund and the Deputy Premier's Miscellaneous Grants
 - ii. local government funding such as the Stronger Communities Fund and Stronger Country Communities Fund,
 - iii. arts funding such as the Regional Cultural Fund,
 - iv. sports funding such as the Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund and the Regional
 - v. Sports Infrastructure Fund,
 - vi. jobs for NSW funding, including the review into Jobs for NSW.
 - b. the manner in which grants are determined, including:
 - i. the oversight of funding determinations,



- ii. the transparency of decision making under grants schemes,
 - iii. the independence of the assessment of projects,
 - iv. the role of Members of Parliament in proposing projects for funding,
 - v. the scope of Ministers' discretion in determining which projects are approved,
 - c. measures necessary to ensure the integrity of grants schemes and public confidence in the allocation of public money, and
 - d. any other related matter.
2. That the Committee report by 31 March 2021.

About the Joint Organisation Chairs' Forum

On 11 May 2018 the NSW Governor General the Hon David Hurley, proclaimed the Local Government Regional Joint Organisations (JOs) under the Local Government Act 1993.

Thirteen JOs were regularised in accordance with the Act and the principal functions of the Organisation are:

- a. to establish strategic regional priorities for the joint organisation area and to establish strategies and plans for delivering those priorities;
- b. to provide regional leadership for the joint organisation area and to be an advocate for strategic regional priorities; and
- c. to identify and take up opportunities for inter-governmental cooperation on matters relating to the joint organisation area.

With the enabling of JOs there is an opportunity for regional NSW to do business differently with the State and Federal Governments. To realise this opportunity, all 13 JOs have been engaging through the collaborative approach of the NSW JO Chairs Forum, they have been meeting every quarter since May 2018.

In the first instance, the Forum recognises the critical importance of grant schemes to enable regional initiatives and support of emergent opportunities. The Forum supports grant funding and the frameworks under which monies are allocated and encourages the continued direct support to the Local Government Sector and their communities. Ensuring an adequate and equitable distribution of grant funding through Local Government and Joint Organisation networks is universally supported by this Forum. Further, the Forum acknowledges the role Local Government plays in extending and delivering State Government

"NSW boasts a network of 13 joint organisations to strengthen collaboration and engagement between state and local governments and improve infrastructure and service delivery to regional communities...joint organisations have transformed the way the NSW government and local councils collaborate, plan, set priorities and deliver important projects on a regional scale... the regional bodies are a key mechanism through which the government delivers funding and programs to regional NSW."

Office of Local Government website



priority projects through its regional networks and grass roots connections, specifically its ability to mobilise and deliver programs in times of crisis and during recovery.

Further, the JOs report that the increase in focus on regional NSW with its corollary NSW Government funding is also welcomed.

At the meeting of 6 August the JO Chairs' Forum (the Forum) resolved to lodge a submission to this Inquiry providing feedback on the opportunity for the NSW Government to better leverage JOs in the funding framework. The Forum raises the following points:

- 1. *The importance of codesign between State and Local Government to outcomes;***
- 2. *That regions, and the JO's that represent them, do have shared priorities but also have unique priorities and that both should be considered in the design of grant programs.***

Please find responses under each of the Terms of Reference following.

That the Public Accountability Committee inquire into and report on the integrity, efficacy and value for money of NSW Government grant programs, and in particular:

- a. the range and availability of funding programs, including but not limited to:**
 - i. discretionary grants funds such as the Premier's Discretionary Fund and the Deputy Premier's Miscellaneous Grants**
 - ii. local government funding such as the Stronger Communities Fund and Stronger Country Communities Fund,**
 - iii. arts funding such as the Regional Cultural Fund,**
 - iv. sports funding such as the Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund and the Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund**
 - v. jobs for NSW funding, including the review into Jobs for NSW**

The Forum provides the following feedback using the Stronger Country Communities' Fund and the Safe and Secure Program as examples.

Many funding programs seek to capitalise on the networks and capabilities offered by Joint Organisations as grantees. Through the outcomes of this review, an opportunity exists to work in close concert with JOs to better target regional funding needs and priorities. By co-designing funding frameworks that align closely to regional and State Government priorities and leveraging the extensive local knowledge and networks offered by JOs, the State has the opportunity to ensure truly targeted, efficient and 'value for money' program delivery.

Please find attached a detailed case study on a collaborative catchment-based approach to water planning in NSW leveraging the JO network and incentivised by value to both Local and State Government. This Case Study suggests that by leveraging the role of the JOs to do business differently, benefits include reduced costs and duplication, better embedment and other efficiencies.

A second salient example is Stronger Country Communities Grant. The last round of this grant funding was of great interest to the JOs, it targeted regional communities and its goals dovetailed with many of



the JOs' strategic priorities. However, in order to access the grant JOs were advised that there was no mechanism by which a regional application could be lodged. JOs were required, to lodge an individual application for each LGA in their Region and then become part of the competitive funding process. The obvious outcome of this approach was that the regional project might have received funding approval for some of the JO LGAs and not others, meaning it would become unviable. In addition, the duplication in effort of having to lodge, for some JOs, 10 funding applications for the same project was completely inefficient.

The situation was further exacerbated by the fact that JOs had to compete with their member councils for funding, a situation that did not sit well with many councils. This problem could have been resolved if some of the funding pool had been "ring-fenced" for the delivery of regional projects by JOs. The funding as it currently operates does not encourage councils to collaborate for better outcomes.

If given the opportunity to present to the Inquiry, Joint Organisations will provide further advice including in areas like waste and roads.

- b. the manner in which grants are determined, including:**
 - i. the oversight of funding determinations,**
 - ii. the transparency of decision making under grants schemes,**
 - iii. the independence of the assessment of projects,**
 - iv. the role of Members of Parliament in proposing projects for funding,**
 - v. the scope of Ministers' discretion in determining which projects are approved**

The Forum advises that the current frameworks for funding for regional communities, including those determined by the NSW Treasury Guidelines, are disadvantageous and skewed in favour of metropolitan communities. The use of Benefit Cost Ratio and other similar methodologies that require scale and population to render an appropriate 'benefit' coefficient ultimately ensure that a disproportionate amount of funding will go to high population growth areas in western Sydney. This approach does not take into consideration the strategic importance or relative benefits smaller scale projects or support programs in regional communities. A salient example of this is the proportion of regional funding and program support offered through Destination NSW, which despite various reviews does not provide equitable funding into regional NSW despite the visitor economy being an integral employer and contributor to regional communities

By supporting project funding and delivery through the JOs, Governments have the opportunity to coordinate regional delivery of projects and initiatives that benefit a network of smaller towns and communities, many of whom may not be able to design and deliver impactful projects individually. Given the representative role JOs play across a region they remain an a-political broker able to advocate on behalf of Councils and communities representing all sides of the political spectrum. If given the opportunity, the Forum would like to provide you with more detail in this regard.

It is suggested that better use of JOs in the funding framework will reduce the likelihood of pork barreling based on either a local government areas or State electorate footprints and other outcomes not based on the flawed funding guidance of Treasury.



c. measures necessary to ensure the integrity of grants schemes and public confidence in the allocation of public money

All stakeholders recognise that Joint Organisations provide an opportunity for the State to work with recognised and regulated entities that offer confidence for their funding, strategic and collaborative frameworks at the regional level.

Please see recommendations below where in the first instance, the Forum suggests that grants should:

- Allow the time for consultation and codesign with intended recipients on the program's criteria, funding amounts and co-investment;
- Allow time for the grant application process;
- Give consideration to alternatives to Councils having to develop business cases for projects and other unwieldy process – for example leveraging the strategic work undertaken in Councils' Integrated Planning and Reporting Process and the JOs' Statement of Regional Strategic Priority;
- Take advantage of the value JOs can play in the administration of grant funding, and the reduction in duplication from 92 regional Councils to 13 Joint Organisations;
- Include dedicated funding streams for JOs;
- Empower and support JOs to provide critical brokerage and coordinating services for state funding priorities, and leverage local networks to distribute funding and programs throughout the communities they represent
- Recognize that both built infrastructure and services are an important part of community resilience and capabilities and should be supported by government through priority investments and programs

d. any other related matter.

The overwhelming advantage of Joint Organisations is their stability as prescribed under the Local Government Act. Like Councils, Joint Organisations will always be there where State Departments, Regional Leadership Executives and entities like Regional Development Australia experience machinery of government change to greater or lesser degrees.



While not all JOs are at the same level of maturity, there is an equality of opportunity offered by all JOs to the State from a sustainable network of these entities. There is a greater value to the State of one functional network of JOs than a patchwork of capability and capacity.

There is a significant opportunity for State and Local Governments to work through Joint Organisations on a variety of standardised approaches for example to data, strategy and regional governance to deliver better outcomes for regional communities.

For these opportunities to be realised, State government funding frameworks must recognise the critical role played by JOs as independent brokers, able to coordinate grass roots project delivery aligned to state priorities. JOs are well placed to deliver programs within an impartial and transparent governance framework, and ensure bi-partisan application of agreed funding programs and guidelines, the value of which is indeed recognised in the intent of this inquiry.

State agencies are increasingly realising the value of working with JOs. This includes:

- a. Providing advice on regional priority;
- b. Coordinating Councils as State agencies seek to consult in region;
- c. Providing a forum to reach regional leaders (Mayors and General Managers) or other Council personnel eg planning;
- d. Providing support in navigation of Councils and their communities eg stakeholder support for Regional Water Strategies;
- e. Providing a mechanism to deliver better value from State programs through aggregation eg Bridge Assessments;
- f. Providing representation from a Local Government Perspective at the Regional Leadership Executive;

KEY MESSAGES

- *JO's were established by the NSW Government to provide a systematic approach to:*
 - *Local Government collaboration at a regional scale;*
 - *intergovernmental collaboration between State and Local Government at a regional scale*
- *The benefits of JO's are shared between State and Local Government.*
- *Currently, JO's are funded by Local Government only.*
- *JO's are not financially sustainable on Local Government funding alone.*
- *The State can and should contribute to funding of JO's through:*
 - *Base funding – in recognition of the shared systemic benefit derived by state and local government through the existence of JO's*
 - *Systemic and systematic state agency funding – specifically in recognition of the experience key portfolio's where there has been an enhanced return on state funding for regional outcomes when working with JO's (as compared with alternative delivery options).*



- g. Offering consistent touch points to State agencies as they go through machinery of government changes; for example TfNSW;
- h. Enabling efficient monitoring and implementation of State regional plans, for example planning, transport and water; and
- i. Providing sound governance and structural arrangements for hosting staff to support State programs at the regional level eg Contaminated Lands, Biodiversity, Disaster Preparedness.

JO's fulfill a unique niche when it comes to scaling programs to regional outcomes and which consistently offer a more effective and efficient return on State funding of State spend. For example, generally speaking it is unlikely that annual funding for a regional scale technical expert, such as a regional contaminated lands officer, could be split between JO member councils to deliver a consistent outcome of the same quality and quantity across the region. This is because JOs have a deep a deep knowledge of Local Government and through Councils², a deep and abiding knowledge of place.

That systemic and systematic grant funding of JO's aligns with the prescribed statutory function of JO's to drive *intergovernmental collaboration between State and Local Government* and, in turn, aligns the efforts of State and Local Government 'machinery' at the regional scale. The experience of and opportunities for JO's spans multiple portfolios (eg enabling regional adaption, water, energy, biodiversity, economic strategies, human service programs, strategic land use planning etc)

There is a need for the State to support the value of Joint Organisations in two ways:

- a. **Base funding** – recognize, through contributing to base funding in collaboration with local government, the growing role JOs are taking in supporting State priorities and programming and in building alignment between state and local government priorities at the regional level; and
- b. **Systemic and systematic portfolio funding:** Through recognition in the funding framework across all state agencies of the potential the JOs have to:
 - i. **Deliver state agency functions in a regional context:** There is an opportunity for JO's to be funded to house regional staff, in relevant state agency portfolios, which would support delivery of state agency functions and enable JO sustainability; and
 - ii. **Deliver grant funded regional programming:** Deliver programming on behalf of the State that is better value, more efficient and effective through changes to various funding programs.



Recommendations to the Inquiry

1. Review of the assessment criteria and Guidelines for funding under programs administered by NSW Treasury that better reflect the impact and significance of programs and infrastructure on regional communities.
2. Recognize the critical brokerage and coordination role played by JOs in supporting State priorities and programming and in building alignment between state and local government priorities across regions by;
 - i. Working with JOs to co- design and develop regional funding frameworks and programs to ensure they are appropriate and fit-for-purpose for local delivery and implementation; and
 - ii. Providing adequate support for JOs to continue to deliver these functions.

Finally, the Forum appreciates the significant challenges the year 2020 has faced us all. Given the importance of funding that adds value to member Councils and their communities across the 13 JOs in regional NSW Forum stands ready to provide what support it is able.

Please feel free to contact me on

Yours sincerely

Cr Rowena Abbey
Chair
NSW JO Chairs Forum



Case Study

A collaborative catchment-based approach to water planning in NSW leveraging the JO network and incentivised by value to both Local and State Government.

Background

The recent drought is a significant event that provides a check on the effectiveness of current water policies. There are still communities facing ground zero with their water resources until significant runoff is received to replenish storages. The current policies on new storages need to be considered along with the priorities for water allocation need to be reviewed in the light of recent experience. The strong views expressed external to the regions make the need for clear regional communication imperative if the past mistakes of marginalisation of regional communities are not to be repeated.

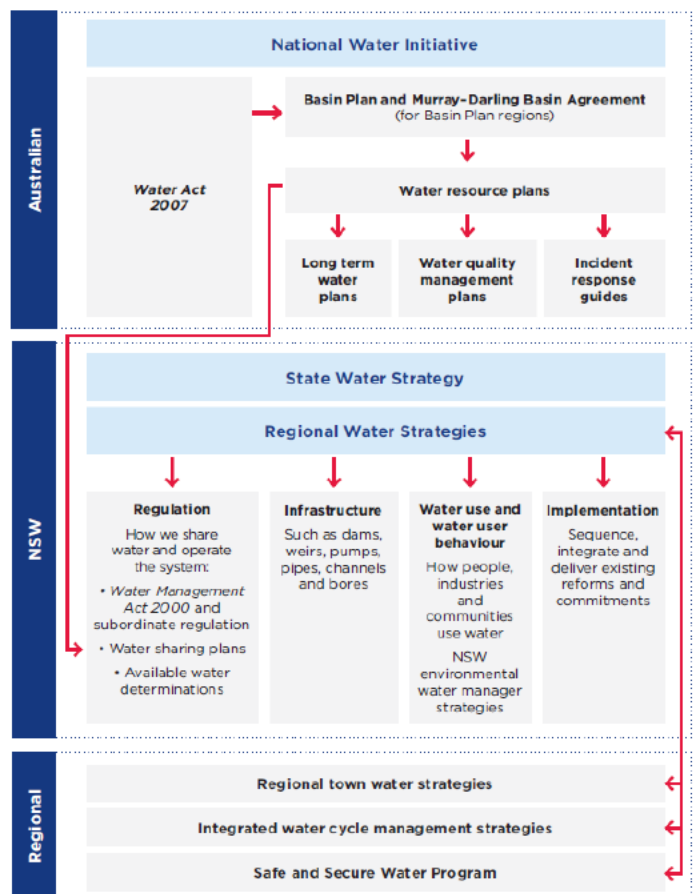
With the advent of Regional Water Strategies and their implementation, there is an opportunity to introduce collaboration required for Cabinet to make confident and informed investment decisions regarding the State's water resource. Done well, this will save money for the State and Local Government while bringing peace of mind throughout regional communities and across all levels of government.

Local Government is best placed to administer the delivery of urban water for regional communities in NSW.

With the advent of Regional Water Strategies and their implementation, there is an opportunity to introduce collaboration required to make confident and informed investment decisions regarding the State's water resource.

The collaboration will save money for the State and Local Government while bringing peace of mind throughout regional communities and across all levels of government.

Figure 6. NSW water policy and planning context



The Safe and Secure Program offers funding to Councils and JOs for IWCMs and Regional Town Water Strategies. Similar work can be identified in both of these strategies as well as in Regional Water Strategies. Analysis of the various strategies shows there is an opportunity, by working collaboratively at the regional level to reduce duplication and leverage existing resources to develop one source of truth. Quite simply, cheaper, smarter and safer.

Currently planning for town water security in regional NSW is happening across two tranches with a third proposed.

- Integrated Water Cycle Management
- Regional Water Strategies
- Regional Town Water Strategies

There is considerable cross-over in the scope of works required to develop each of these plans and significant opportunities for alignment and optimisation of the modelling, data collection and planning for water security solutions that arise from these plans.

The table below provides a comparison of Regional Water Strategies, JO Regional Town Water Strategies and LWU IWCM Plans.

	IWCM	RWS	RTWS
<i>What is it?</i>	Strategic assessment and planning for individual LWU including town water supply and sewerage. Includes consideration of regional options. Key planning framework for strategic town water supply and sewerage service water planning by LWUs.	Long-term strategies to identify and assess water security risks and consider policy, management and infrastructure options to address these risks to ensure the secure supply of water to communities, the environment and Aboriginal cultural values while supporting regional economic prosperity. Key planning framework for water resource management in NSW to set a forward state-wide work program that will form part of the State's Water Strategy.	Strategic assessment of and planning for regional solutions to town water supply and treatment across and/or beyond individual council local water utilities (LWU) boundaries. Informs LWUs' IWCM strategies and regional water strategies on regional town water security considerations.
<i>Proponent</i>	LWUs	NSW Government	JOs (with in-principle agreement by benefiting LWUs)



Geographic Area Covered	It covers Individual LWU area of operation.	12 major NSW catchments/regions	Constituent LWUs (across 2 or more LWU boundaries, where value of such a study is evident)
What is the focus?	Assess, plan and manage the short and long-term town water supply and sewage management needs of each urban community within the LWU's area of operation, including identifying and evaluating non-infrastructure and infrastructure options to address water security, water quality and sewage management risks in the LWU's town water supply and sewerage systems.	Assess and plan a regions short and long-term water needs for all water users Better understand current and future water needs of catchment/region to improve resilience and manage risks to water availability and security. Provide public and water users with directions about how long-term water needs can be met through policy, planning and infrastructure options	Assess and plan interconnected urban water supply systems across LWU boundaries for 2 or more LWUs to meet the urban communities short and long-term town water supply needs, including identifying and evaluating regional efficiency measures and across LWU boundaries interconnected infrastructure options to address as a whole the water security risks in each town water supply system
Typical Scope of Work	Individual LWU/local system demand analysis and secure yield analysis, strategic options analysis and solutions identification to address local water security, quality and sewerage service needs/risks in accordance with OPIE Water's 2019IWCM Checklist. Includes scenario building and Triple Bottom Line (TBL) assessment of options.	Establish metrics for outcomes at regional level. Develop priority options, including options assessment process and determining whether any options need to be accelerated; e.g. for drought response	High level demand assessment and secure yield analysis, including for individual LWUs if needed, to assess regional options and solutions, including, regional secure yield and options analysis and consideration of regional water security, supply and treatment opportunities.

Source: TABLE-COMPARISON OF REGIONAL WATER STRATEGIES, JO REGIONAL TOWN WATER STRATEGIES AND LWU IWCM STRATEGIES- DPIE Water – September 2019



The NSW Government is committed to delivering twelve Regional Water Strategies, these strategies will set out a long-term 'roadmap' of actions to:

- Deliver and manage water for local communities
- Enable economic prosperity
- Recognise and protect Aboriginal cultural values and rights
- Protect and enhance the environment
- Affordability - Identify least cost policy and infrastructure options

The NSW Safe and Secure Water Program (SSWP) makes funding available to Joint Organisations to develop Regional Town Water Supply Strategies and the Integrated Water Cycle Management.

Currently the Safe and Secure Program is offering funding of varying percentages to deliver IWCMs to individual Councils where the JOs can aggregate these in a standard joint procurement approach. Regional Town Water Strategies have been offered to JOs funded at 75%.

Regional Town Water Strategies are intended to address broader issues across local water utility boundaries, town water security across the region and potential linkages. The process includes:

- Identify local and regional town water security deficiencies and risks, and identify local and regional options.
- Identify, assess and develop of regional solutions to drinking water treatment, sewage treatment and reuse.
- Assess how regional solutions can be integrated into a council's IWCM strategies.

ADVICE FROM NAMOI JO

A number of Joint Organisations and Regional Organisations of Councils have collaborations of Council Local Water Utility operations and DPIE – Water. In all incidences these are focused and collaborative forums.

Namoi Unlimited convened meetings of Councils, DPIE – Water (LWU) and DPIE – Namoi Regional Water Strategy team to discuss a collaborative approach to data and analysis, demand and yield, security risk and deficiencies, and future water security and infrastructure options.

Namoi Unlimited has been deemed eligible and is making application to the NSW Government's Safe and Secure Water Program for funding for a Regional Town Water Supply Strategy. The Regional Town Water Strategy is expected to fund demand and yield analysis for all towns across the Namoi region. The work will provide options for local and regional infrastructure. This work will be contributed to the draft of the Namoi Regional Water Strategy.

Whilst the quote for the scope of works is currently being finalized, it is estimated to be about \$400,000 across five Councils. The NSW Safe and Secure Water Fund has indicated that they can contribute 75% (\$300,000) of the cost. The demand and yield analysis as well as the identified local and regional infrastructure options by Local Government will be a contribution to the Namoi Regional Water Strategy, the value of this contribution is estimated at \$200,000.

Without the involvement and the push for collaboration by Namoi Unlimited and its members, this saving would not have been identified.



- Regional, catchment based data collection and analysis to inform individual utilities, IWCM strategies, and water security analysis.

Throughout the development of these strategies, there are potential savings and collaboration on:

- Local, regional and catchment data and analysis;
- Water security analysis through demand and yield studies;
- The identification of water security deficiencies and risks.
- The development of local and regional infrastructure solutions.

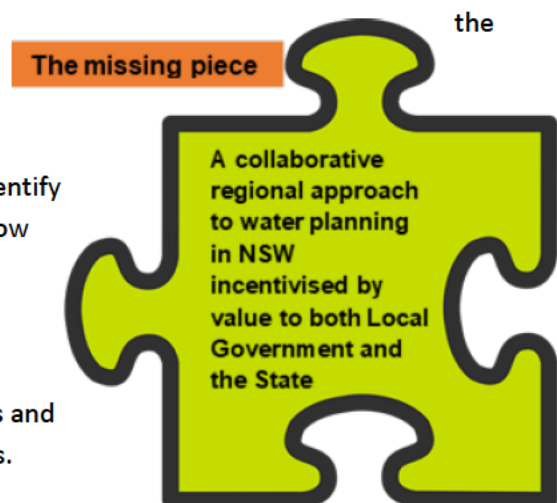
IWCM is being funded through the Safe and Secure Program to Councils at 25-75% depending on Council size.

Governance arrangements under the Regional Water Strategy

The Regional Water Strategies for the Lachlan and Macquarie are near publication and are the first to be undertaken in regional NSW after the Hunter.

Throughout consultations by DPIE with Central NSW JO member Councils on the Lachlan and Macquarie Regional Water Strategies, Councils have advocated for shared modelling and, most importantly, an implementation plan and collaborative structure to enable delivery of options in the Strategy. It is suggested that this implementation plan with governance arrangements would be similar to the DPIE Planning Regional Plan currently being contemplated by TfNSW. This implementation plan would identify actions in the first two years and then review. Please see below some advice on the Town Water SteerCo which has a useful Terms of Reference that could be readily adapted.

It is predicated on shared data and modelling and a collaborative approach to, for example, ground water studies and would ensure that the Strategies deliver on proposed options.



Town Water SteerCo

The strategic regional water policy framework requires collaboration between multiple government agencies, Councils and Joint Organisations, Local Water Utilities and local and regional stakeholders, including in water reliant industries.

In the Lachlan catchment, the Lachlan Valley Regional Town Water Drought Response Steering Committee has been established to facilitate and guide collaboration between NSW government



agencies, Lachlan Valley Councils, and water reliant industries to develop and execute plans to most effectively utilise available water to support social, economic, cultural and environmental outcomes for communities in the Lachlan Valley LGAs during current drought conditions. The Steering Committee will also support the longer-term development of town water security and quality solutions across the region through the Regional Water Strategy.

The Role of the Steering Committee is to:

- Oversee the development, alignment and execution of plans and strategies to best utilise available water in Lachlan Valley LGAs and across the region in current drought conditions. This is to include the development of plans and strategies for recovery and recommencement of normal river and groundwater operations;
- Ensure plans and strategies consider the challenges and interests of relevant stakeholders, including commercial and industrial users;
- Ensure these plans and strategies are completed and executed in a timely fashion;
- Reconcile differences of opinion between stakeholders, and resolve issues as may arise;
- Align planning and response activities with longer term strategies in line with the Government's strategic objectives; and
- Inform and support activities supporting other communities in the region.

The Steering Committee is seen as a potential vehicle for the delivery of a collaborative catchment-based approach to water planning in NSW leveraging the JO network and incentivised by value to both Local and State Government.

The approach

It is envisaged that the deep dive into urban water would be supported under the governance arrangements described above. Preliminary advice regarding the approach, which can be fleshed out in greater detail should they have merit in the States' eyes are:

- Audit members for their needs where they are at varying stages in the IWCM journey.
- From this audit, develop a "program" approach using tranches of prioritised data sets and other activities in producing IWCMs. For example, a regional approach to secure yield that leverages multiple sources, LGAs and catchments will add value to a group procure and would be required very early in the piece to inform other potential activities.
- Provide direction and oversight of a program manager from within industry in region to provide support. This would preferably work in with the engineering placement calendar offered through universities such as Charles Sturt or Sydney. The intention here is to provide support to two streams of activity at a lower cost than using tier one consultancies to deliver program management:



1. Inhouse IWCM data capture and capacity building where the data sets across the region are “apples with apples” enabling benchmarking. Key outcomes here would be a regional approach to integration of IWCM into the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework.
2. Procurement of data sets unable to be generated in house which:
 - a. Offer cost savings as an aggregated procure
 - b. Enable a regional data-set and inform potential regional activity to optimise outcomes.
- Institute the support arrangements to optimise the above – e.g. workshops for members, steering committees, project reference groups, procurement support. Ideally these would include representation from State and Local government.
- The deliverables include IWCM for each Council, a regional report providing advice to the State, Councils and the region on challenges and opportunities. Ideally the heads of consideration for this report would be codesigned with the State. Included in this report is advice to inform better future practise.

The value of this approach is:

- An incentive for all Councils to work regionally as they will be funded at 100% - delivering future benefits where water does not recognise LGA boundaries. This will have the added benefit of taking all Councils into the regional approach even if they are well into their IWCM work;
- 30% plus savings on requisite strategic work;
- A reduction in duplication and leveraging of agency/LWU capability for example in hydrogeological studies;
- Trust to enable sharing of information and best practice leading to more nimble responses during drought;
- Sharing of climate change modelling and agreed secure yield modelling on both State and locally owned storages used for human consumption – this has been a critical failure in the current drought;
- Trusted policy advice to various levels of government;
- Facilitation of consultation processes required by the State and Federal governments;
- A rapid communication response during drought including advice to amend regulation and inform regulators;
- One entity to deal with in the development of IWCM and Regional Town Water Strategies;
- Aggregated procure delivers a better value proposition to the State with cost savings at 30%+;
- JO manages staff turnover and other risks;
- Regional learnings inform further action;
- Weaker Councils are taken on the journey and actually deliver outcomes;
- One source of truth; and
- An ongoing multi agency monitoring group for the actions identified in the Regional Water Strategy.

