

WATER DIRECTORATE news

AUGUST 2011

This newsletter is sent to General Managers and to Water and Sewer Managers in 103 regional Councils in NSW and also to over 140 contacts in government departments and private industry across Australia.

FINALISATION OF THE JOINT WATER DIRECTORATE/LGSA WATER LOSS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

A Final Progress and Evaluation Report was submitted to the Federal Government in August symbolising the last activity of the program.

This report shows that not only has approx 5,400 ML of water been saved annually but also a treasury of knowledge has been gained by many staff across an enormous area of regional NSW.

View the total water saved through this program on the 'meter' and the project locations at www.waterloss.lgsa.org.au.

The September Budget will reveal whether efforts to engage with the State Government in a new WLMP are successful.

Having thanked the program team members, fellow Governance Committee members and support staff in previous newsletters, I thank all 75 LWUs and all relevant staff for their involvement in this valuable project over the past 5 years.

MEMBERSHIP FEES DUE

Membership fees are due for 2011/12. Thanks to the 76 member Councils that have rejoined so far. Please rejoin to continue to receive technical support, networking opportunities with your peers in all 95 member Councils, and technical publications such as last month's *Design of Fire Flow Guidelines*.

UPDATE ON LAND ACQUISITION GUIDELINES

It's pleasing to advise that the Water Directorate's next technical publication will be distributed in October. This document is a joint

project of the Water Directorate and the Roads and Transport Directorate. The publication was prepared by Maddocks Lawyers and provides guidance on all aspects of land acquisition for water, sewer and road infrastructure.

SECTION 64, SEPP AND EXEMPT AND COMPLYING DEVELOPMENT

The Executive Committee believe there may be a number of conflicting issues regarding the application of Section 64 charges for different types of development (eg exempt and complying development). In addition, LWUs may be experiencing difficulties with private certification of activities that affect water and sewer facilities (eg building over sewers).

Therefore, the Executive Committee would like to hear comments from readers in local water utilities regarding these types of issues. Please provide information to me on gmitchell@waterdirectorate.asn.au.

LAST CALL FOR LGSA WATER MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE, GRAFTON, 14-16 SEPTEMBER

The Water Directorate looks forward to facilitating the interactive Water Managers' Forum for the ninth year and catching up with old and new friends. For registration enquiries please contact Karen Rolls, Events Assistant on 9242 4050 or events@lgsa.org.au.

PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION FINAL REPORT ON AUSTRALIA'S URBAN WATER SECTOR INQUIRY SENT TO GOVERNMENT

On 31 August the final report into Australia's Urban Water Sector was completed and sent to the

Australian Government for its consideration. The release of the final report by the Government is the next step in the process. Under the Productivity Commission Act 1998, the Government is required to table the report in each House of the Parliament within 25 sitting days of receipt.

The Productivity Commission advises that when the Government releases the report, a copy will be sent to all participants who made submissions, appeared at the public hearings, attended roundtables, attended either the modelling workshop or were visited by the Commission.

The report will be available for free download from the Commission's website and printed copies will also be available for purchase from the Commission's publications agent.

Further information on all current and completed projects can be obtained from the Commission's website or by contacting on (03)9653 2244 or maps@pc.gov.au.

LATEST REPORT CARD ON NSW WATER AND SEWERAGE SUPPLY

In August the NSW Office of Water released the latest report card on water supply and sewerage performance in country NSW. The document titled *2009/10 NSW Water Supply and Sewerage Performance Monitoring Report* outlines the performance of all NSW local water utilities. The report will be provided shortly to all NSW water utilities and can be accessed at www.water.nsw.gov.au.

Acting Commissioner Tracey Barton said "Performance monitoring and benchmarking are an increasingly important management tool and are required under the National Water Initiative and has been strongly

endorsed by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART)."

Ms Barton also said "NSW performance monitoring and benchmarking also provides valuable data for determining the present position and assessing future water supply and sewerage needs for non-metropolitan NSW. This ensures an appropriate focus and targeting of programs to assist local water utilities. "I'm delighted to say that overall this report reveals that the NSW local water utilities are continuing to perform well, serving a total population of 1.8 million."

The report shows that:

- the typical median water supply residential bill in country NSW has fallen, in real terms, over the past 15 years;
- 80 per cent of the local water utilities in NSW carried out water recycling, mostly for agriculture – an increase of 31 per cent from 9 years ago;
- the total volume recycled in the 2009/10 financial year was 39 billion litres - which is 24 per cent of the volume of sewage collected - higher than country Victoria and all other Australian utilities both metropolitan and rural, except for Brisbane and Adelaide;
- average annual residential water use has fallen from 330 kL to 175 kL per connected property - a reduction of over 47 per cent over the past 19 years, and is similar to country Victoria and lower than all the other Australian states;
- average annual residential water use was also lower than all the capital city utilities except for Brisbane and Melbourne - this achievement was assisted by the strong pricing signals provided, with a median water usage charge of 163c/kL;
- the water supply for over 99 per cent of the urban population in country NSW complied with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines;
- operation, maintenance and administration cost per property for water supply was lower than Brisbane and Canberra, and the country utilities in all the other

states, but higher than the other capital city utilities;

- 91 per cent of utilities have a sound strategic business plan and long-term financial plan;
- 89 per cent of utilities have a sound water conservation plan and 93 per cent have a sound drought management plan;
- water main breaks have remained much lower than all the other states and the capital city utilities, indicating good asset condition;
- annual revenue was \$1,076M and the current replacement cost of the assets employed was \$20.6 billion;
- overall compliance with the 19 requirements of the NSW *Best Practice Management of Water Supply and Sewerage Guidelines* is now 85 per cent, compared to 46 per cent five years ago.

Water industry reviewers should take note of this strong performance data rather than ignore it.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING DATES

The Executive Committee has met three times in 2011 and the remaining meeting dates are 8 September and 9-10 November. Members are welcome to forward issues for discussion at these meetings or attend the AGM on Thursday 10 November.

Currently vacancy exists for the remaining 16 months of the Executive Committee term for a representative from the Hunter group of Councils.

Brian Carter of Singleton Shire Council resigned in May after more than 10 years on the Committee. We thank Brian for all his contributions to the Executive Committee and wish him well in his future pursuits.

I would like to hear from an experienced water professional from Singleton Shire, Muswellbrook Shire or Upper Hunter Shire Councils about this voluntary position. If you are interested then please also consider attending an upcoming meeting as an observer to get a feel for this rewarding role.

Gary Mitchell
Executive Officer
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