

## JANUARY 2020

*This newsletter is sent to General Managers and to Water and Sewer Managers in 89 regional Councils in NSW and also to 80 contacts in government departments and private industry across Australia.*

### 2020 – HAPPY NEW YEAR

On behalf of the Executive Committee, Happy New Year. I hope all our readers had a safe festive season especially those facing down current challenges with drought and fire. Best wishes to all in rising to meet these challenges this year. The Water Directorate also had its 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary on 18 December. Many happy returns!

### EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S UPDATE

Issues we have been working through on behalf of our members include:

- Drought updates from Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) and WaterNSW
- Water industry training
- All options on the table
- Telcos on Tanks
- Water restrictions regimes
- NSW bushfire crisis

We will keep you up to date on progress in future editions.

### DROUGHT UPDATE

The number of towns with high risk of failure of water supply has increased to 49 in January. Many more small towns continue to cart water by truck, whilst larger towns are urgently investing in emergency water supply works to strengthen water supplies, including bores and emergency desalination.

More info is available via DPIE's [DroughtHub](#) page. A combined [Critical Water Advisory Panel](#) meeting was held on 4 December 2019.

It is important to keep your DPIE [Regional Manager](#) up to date on your situation to access any assistance you need.

### NSW GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

- A new [Office of Drought Response](#) has been formed to better coordinate support.
- \$87.76 million in additional [funds flow for emergency water infrastructure](#) into 30 new emergency water projects.

### IT'S OFFICIAL

The Bureau of Meteorology has confirmed that [2019 was Australia's hottest and driest on record](#).

The national average rainfall total for the year was 277.63mm, well below the previous record of 314.46mm in 1902 during the Federation Drought. If you're curious, the country wide average is 419mm.

The BOM has advised through their [Climate and Water Outlook for January–March 2020, issued 19 December 2019](#) that conditions over summer will

remain hot and dry, however the outlook over the next 3 months is more neutral with the positive IOD and negative SAM decaying.

### BUSHFIRE CRISIS

As we go to print, a number of our member utilities in south east NSW are dealing with massive bushfires, evacuations and power outages.

There have been a number of offers of assistance received here at the Water Directorate from interstate to provide relief engineers and operators. If you need additional resources, please [email me](#) and we will connect you.

### WATER QUALITY RISK INCREASING

As indicated by NSW Health's [water quality incident](#) page, bushfires and drought have affected drinking water quality for a number of Local Water Utilities due to damage to water assets, electrical supply failure or impacts on catchment water quality.

UNSW's Professor Stuart Khan was interviewed recently on [water contamination risks this bushfire season](#), including his outlook for the future. Recommended reading for all water professionals.

## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS WIOA OPERATOR OF THE YEAR

A reminder that nominations are open until **Friday 14 February 2020** for the [WIOA NSW Operator of the Year Award](#).

Water Directorate has sponsored this Award in partnership with WIOA for many years. The honour will be bestowed at the upcoming WIOA NSW Operators Conference on 1 April.

[Nominating your operator](#) is a great opportunity to recognise the value and importance of their work. The winner will participate in WIOA's study tour of New Zealand. Don't forget to ask your nominees whether they hold a current passport!

## NEW DAM SAFETY REQUIREMENTS IN FORCE

On 1 November 2019 the *Dams Safety Act 2015* and Dams Safety Regulation 2019 established the new body – Dams Safety NSW. Information on the reforms can be found [here](#), and via their [FAQ's](#) sheet.

Previous dam safety guidance from the 1978 has been [archived here](#). Dams Safety NSW advises that this material is available information only, will remain available for a limited time, and must not be relied upon when making dam safety decisions.

Dams Safety NSW can be contacted via 02 9842 8073 [info@damsafety.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@damsafety.nsw.gov.au) [www.damsafety.nsw.gov.au/](http://www.damsafety.nsw.gov.au/)

## REGIONAL WATER STRATEGIES

The NSW Government has confirmed that targeted consultation is occurring for [Regional Water Strategies](#)

in the Macquarie, Gwydir and Lachlan valleys. Draft strategies for these valleys will be released by March.



We were also pleased to have the Department's Executive Director Regional Water Strategies, Rachel Connell speak with us at Water Directorate's November Executive Committee meeting. A copy of her presentation is available upon request.

All 12 strategies in NSW are intended to be released by the end of this year.

## IN THE NEWS

With the fires and drought impacting NSW local water utilities, there are a number of LWUs in the news:

- [How the NSW gov is mobilising a water effort for 90 drought stricken towns in NSW](#)
- [Uralla's town water undrinkable](#)
- [Cooma water reservoir breaks sending deluge into town](#)
- [Bellingen votes to procure a portable desalination plant](#)
- [MidCoast Council seeking approval to proceed with desalination](#)
- [Firefighting helicopter crashes into Bega water supply dam](#)

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- **AWA NSW Heads of Water Forum**, Sydney, 28 Feb
- **AWA/IWA Australia-NZ YWP conference**, Brisbane 12-13 March
- **WIOA NSW Operators Conference**, Tamworth, 1-2 April
- **Ozwater '20** Adelaide, 5-7 May
- **Qldwater Small/remote communities workshop**, Goondiwindi, 13-14 May

## WATER DIRECTORATE PUBLICATIONS

Our *O&M Manual for the Design, Operation and Maintenance of Groundwater Bores for Drinking Water* is hot of the press and available from our website.

We have over 80 publications available for [free download for members](#) or non-members can purchase them through our [online Bookshop](#).

We have also made submissions to the NSW Productivity Commission (on water and energy) and the Commonwealth Productivity Commission (on training).

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Proposed 2020 meeting dates, venues to be confirmed:

- Thursday 12 March
- Thursday 21 May (note, date to be confirmed)
- Thursday 9 July
- Thursday 10 September
- Wednesday 11 and Thursday 12 November

Brendan Guiney  
Executive Officer

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