

Annual Review

2025–2026

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Water Directorate proudly acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country across New South Wales, their rich culture and their connection to the land and water on which we rely. We pay respect to Aboriginal Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal people.

The Water Directorate is proud to partner with the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water and Aboriginal Affairs NSW to deliver the Aboriginal Pathways: Fresh Start into Water Operations pilot program.

Designed as an entry point into the water industry, the program provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants with practical skills in water operations, water sampling and testing, workplace health and safety, and an introduction to career opportunities across the water sector.

The initiative reflects the Water Directorate's commitment to supporting workforce development, creating employment pathways and increasing Aboriginal participation in the regional water sector.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Introduction

This year marks an exciting change in leadership of the NSW Water Directorate Executive Committee, as I step into the role of Chair, with Geoffrey Veneris serving as Deputy Chair. I am honoured to take on this opportunity and look forward to working closely with our members and stakeholders as we continue to support and strengthen the water industry across New South Wales.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Wayne Beatty for his outstanding service and leadership over many years. Under Wayne's stewardship, the Water Directorate strengthened its position as the peak body representing Local Water Utilities (LWUs) across regional NSW, expanded its advocacy influence and continued to deliver significant value to members. His commitment to the water sector and regional communities leaves a strong legacy on which we will continue to build.

As Chair, I am proud to take on this role at a time when LWUs face both significant challenges and exciting opportunities. Workforce capability, water security, financial sustainability, climate resilience, digital transformation and regulatory reform continue to shape the operating environment for our members. The Water Directorate remains committed to helping members navigate these challenges while ensuring the unique needs of regional NSW are recognised and understood.



Advocacy and Impact

The Water Directorate continued to provide a strong voice for regional LWUs throughout the year.

Key priorities included engagement with the NSW Government's response to the Productivity and Equality Commission's Review of Funding Models for Local Water Utilities, advocacy for fit-for-purpose funding arrangements, support for water security initiatives in western NSW and representation on matters including workforce development, regulatory reform, environmental compliance and long-term sector sustainability.

The Water Directorate also represented member interests on emerging issues such as PFAS management, climate resilience, drought preparedness, workforce shortages and future water security, ensuring regional perspectives were considered in government decision-making processes.

Strategy 2030

One year after its launch, Strategy 2030 continues to guide the Water Directorate's priorities and investment decisions. Progress across the four Strategic Focus Areas demonstrates the value of a clear long-term vision for both the organisation and the sector.

Workforce development remains a key focus area, with the development and roll out of new technical training and content, and ongoing support for training pathways, workforce initiatives and industry collaboration. We need to build capability and leadership within the sector to sustain regional water services into the future.

Annual Forum

Our fourth Annual Forum, Frights, Floods and Foresight: Navigating Water Risk Management, brought together more than 100 representatives from LWUs, government agencies, industry and sector partners.

The program explored water security, infrastructure investment, financial sustainability, source water protection, emerging contaminants and digital transformation. Highlights included a keynote presentation by Annette Davison (Risk Edge), alongside presentations from Jim Fear (Jacobs), Stuart Wilson (WSAA), Jason Ip (Riverina Water) and Fiona Loadsman (WaterNSW).

I thank the Water Directorate team for delivering another successful event and acknowledge the support of our sponsors: Beca Hunter H2O, Atom Consulting, ARUP, GTS Group, Taggle and NSW Public Works..

Planning is already underway for the 2026 Forum, From Insights to Action: Digital Water in Practice, which will continue to support innovation, knowledge sharing and collaboration across the regional water sector.

Thanks, and Recognition

The success of the Water Directorate is built on the expertise, commitment and generosity of the people who contribute their time and knowledge on behalf of the sector.

I thank the Executive Committee for its leadership throughout the year and acknowledge Gillian Marchant for her years of service and contribution to the Committee.

Congratulations to Wayne Beatty on receiving a 25-Year Service Medallion, and to Bruce Logan and Graham Gordon on receiving 10-Year Service Medallions in recognition of their service to the water industry and regional communities.

I also welcome Cr Claire Pontin as the Local Government NSW representative on the Executive Committee and thank Cr Dominic King for his valuable contribution during his tenure.

Finally, I thank Brendan Guiney and the Water Directorate team for their professionalism, commitment and hard work throughout the year.

I look forward to working with our members, partners and stakeholders as we continue to strengthen the regional water sector and deliver value for the communities we serve.

Brie Jowett
Chair, NSW Water Directorate



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Introduction

It is a privilege to serve as Executive Officer of the NSW Water Directorate and support our 90 Local Water Utility (LWU) members across regional NSW.

The first full year of Strategy 2030 implementation has been a significant one for our organisation. Guided by the priorities identified by members, we have focused on strengthening capability across the sector, improving knowledge sharing, supporting innovation and helping LWUs respond to an increasingly complex operating environment.

As always, our success is built on the willingness of members to collaborate, share expertise and work collectively to improve outcomes for communities across regional New South Wales. I thank our Executive Committee for its leadership and ongoing commitment to the sector.

Delivering Strategy 2030

Our work throughout 2025–26 has been guided by the four Strategic Focus Areas of our Strategic Plan 2030:

- Address regulatory challenges and promote innovation
- Knowledge sharing and knowledge management
- Local water utility risk and resilience
- Workforce development, skills and training

Together, these priorities provide a practical framework for supporting LWUs while responding to evolving sector challenges and opportunities.

Knowledge Sharing and Innovation

The Water Directorate exists to connect people, share knowledge and build capability across the sector.

During the year we improved access to technical information, resources and expertise through our communications, publications, online platforms and member services. We commenced a review of our technical publications, continued expanding HydroHub as a central knowledge resource for members, and began development of a Digital Water Roadmap to help utilities navigate emerging technologies and increasing digitalisation.

Internally, we enhanced our knowledge management systems, including SharePoint, Microsoft Copilot and collaboration tools, to improve information sharing and organisational efficiency.

Building Risk and Resilience

Supporting resilient and sustainable water services remains a core focus.

The Water Directorate continued its involvement in the Town Water Risk Reduction Program, Advanced Operational Support initiatives, leakage reduction programs and related sector projects. These initiatives help LWUs improve operational performance, strengthen preparedness and reduce risk.

We're also a partner of the ARC Training Centre for Climate Resilient Water, ensuring regional NSW perspectives contribute to nationally significant research, capability building and innovation.





Workforce Development and Training

Workforce capability remains one of the greatest challenges facing LWUs and one of the Water Directorate's highest priorities.

This year, we expanded our learning and development offerings with the launch of the Water Operator Safety Card and Work Health and Safety Awareness Module for Decision Makers. We continued promoting AquaCard and BrownCard and progressed additional learning pathways and micro-credentials.

Significant progress was also made on the development of 18 online training modules supporting the WSAA Codes for Regional NSW. We continued supporting the Operator Competency Benchmark, Workforce Development Roadmap and Skills and Training Action Plan through collaboration with DCCEEW, Qldwater, Water Research Australia, BuildSkills Australia and WSAA.

Beyond technical training, we supported initiatives focused on Aboriginal employment pathways, leadership development and long-term workforce planning to help build a capable and sustainable workforce for the future.

Looking Ahead

As implementation of Strategy 2030 continues, the Water Directorate will remain focused on strengthening capability, supporting knowledge sharing, improving resilience and helping members navigate change.

A major focus for 2026–27 will be progressing initiatives across the four Strategic Focus Areas while continuing to deliver practical value to members and strengthen the voice of regional NSW within the broader water sector.

Thank You

Finally, I would like to thank our team: Jessica Gralton, Sarah Eastman, Fiona Setu, Juliet Cobb and Nicky Bekker. Their professionalism, dedication and enthusiasm continue to strengthen the Water Directorate and the services we provide to members across New South Wales.

Together, we are building a more capable, resilient and sustainable future for LWUs and the communities they serve.

Brendan Guiney

Executive Officer, NSW Water Directorate



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Executive Committee



Graham Attenborough*
Eurobodalla Shire Council 5/5



Wayne Beatty
Chair
Orange City Council
Central West
Attendance 5/5



Clare Cam
Mid-Western Council
Orana
Attendance 5/5



Graham Gordon
Griffith City Council
South West
Attendance 3/5



Katie Hardy*
Singleton Shire Council 4/5



Danielle Hargreaves*
Central Coast Council 3/5



Cameron Hawkins
Port Macquarie Hastings Council
Mid North Coast
Attendance 5/5



Jason Ip
Riverina Water County Council
South West
Attendance 5/5



Brie Jowett
Chair
Tweed Shire Council
North Coast
Attendance 5/5



Matt Kidd
Shoalhaven City Council
Illawarra
Attendance 5/5



Bruce Logan
Tamworth Regional Council
New England
Attendance 5/5



Steve Marshall*
Bega Valley Shire Council 3/5



Michael McKenzie*
Rous County Council 5/5



Doug Moorby
Narromine Shire Council
Orana
Attendance 5/5



Wes Trotter
Kempsy Shire Council
Mid North Coast
Attendance 5/5



Geoffrey Veneris
Goldenfields Water County Council
South West
Attendance 4/5

Appointed Committee Members



Cr Claire Pontin
LGNSW Elected Representative,
Mayor MidCoast Council 2/2



Anthony Luu
LGNSW Representative
Attendance 4/5



Shaun McBride
LGNSW Representative
5/5

Departing Committee Members

We express our gratitude to the following Executive Committee and Appointed Committee Members for their service to the Water Directorate: Cr Dominic King (3/3), and Gillian Marchant** (2/3)

*Newly elected in 2026

**Resigned, retired, or departed

Team



Welcome, Nicky Bekker

Nicky joined the Water Directorate in November 2025 and is based in Sydney. Nicky brings deep expertise in stakeholder engagement, change and project management, and a strong commitment to inclusion and community resilience. She has over 21 years' experience as an engagement and program specialist, having built partnerships across Australia and internationally.



Welcome back, Sarah Eastman

We welcomed Sarah back from maternity leave. With her technical background and experience in environmental science and waste, she is well placed to progress strategic Focus Area 1 (Address regulatory challenges and promote innovation), and in particular Strategic Goal 1.6 (Environment).



All the best, Juliet Cobb

We would like to thank Juliet for sharing and applying her experience in publishing, government and education during her eleven years with the Water Directorate, and wish her all the best on her retirement.

ABOUT US



OUR MISSION

To provide independent technical advice to local water utilities and collaborate with government and non-government for better outcomes.



OUR VISION

To ensure local water utilities deliver safe, secure and affordable water and sewerage services to regional NSW.

OUR MEMBERS

Our 90 member Local Water Utilities:



Manage

380 water supply schemes and 300 sewerage schemes and 49 recycled water schemes



Serve

almost 2 million people across regional NSW



Own

\$32 billion in water and sewerage assets



Employ

about 2,400 water operators and 500 engineers, managers and support staff



Supply

312 GL/ annum water and treat 160 GL/annum sewage

OUR KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Policy and advocacy:



Regulatory:



Planning and Environment



Health



Office of Local Government

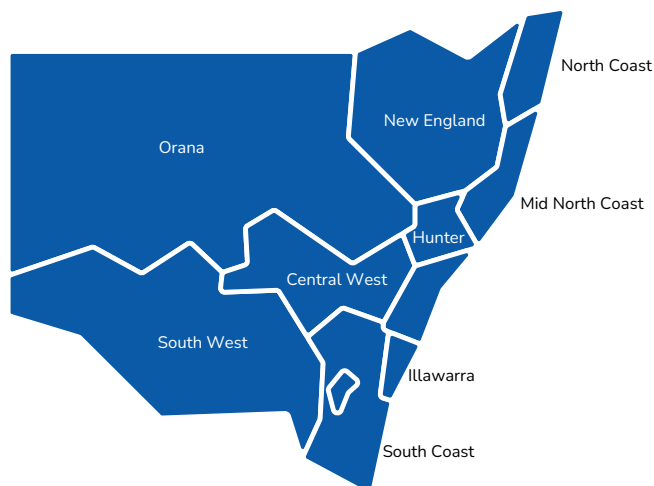


Dam Safety

Technical:



LOCAL WATER UTILITY REGIONS

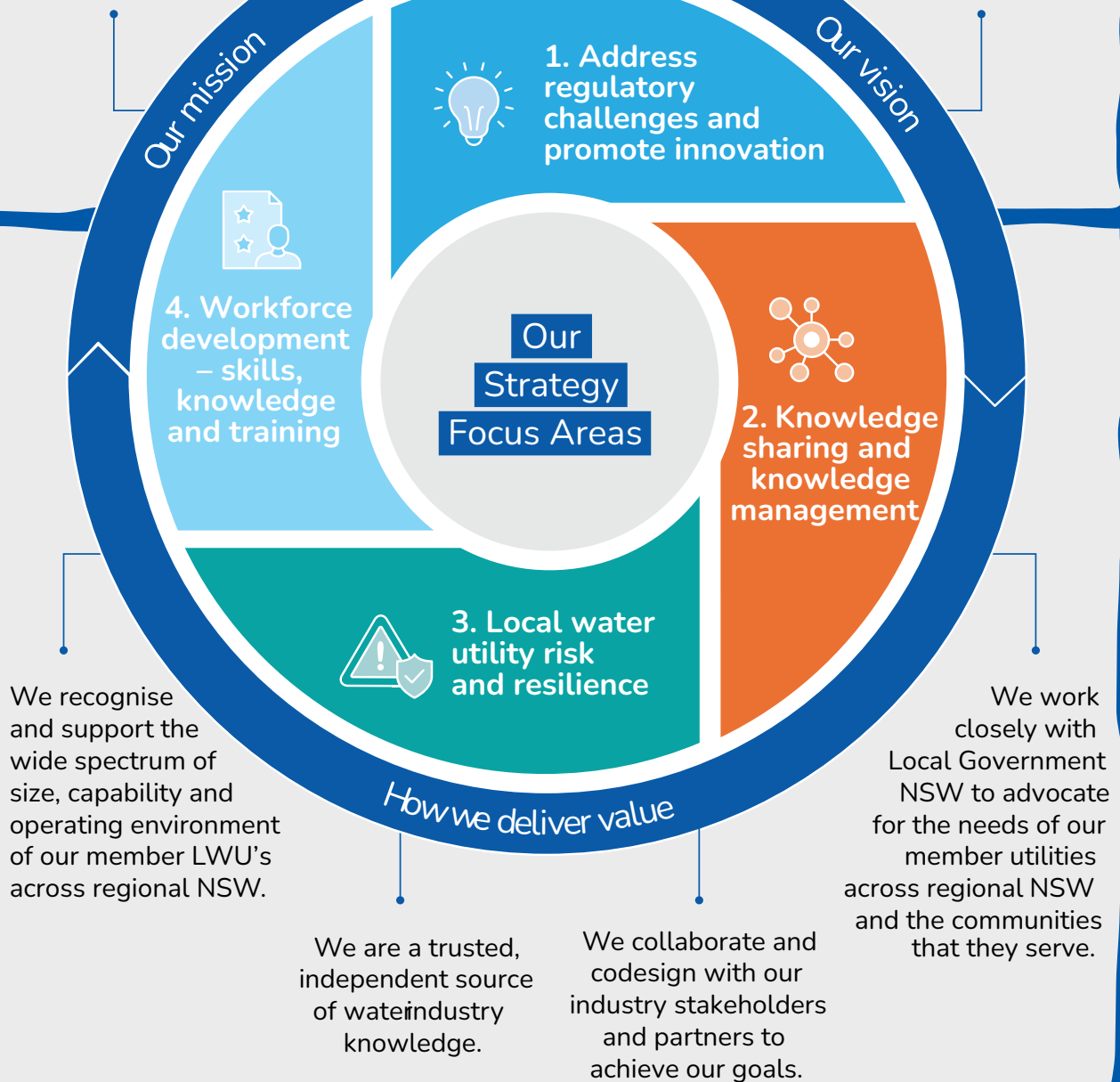


OUR STRATEGY

The Water Directorate's Strategy 2030 provides the roadmap for our activities, advocacy and member services. Read the full strategy at: <https://www.waterdirectorate.asn.au/aboutus/strategicplan>

To provide independent technical advice to local water utilities and collaborate with government and non-government for better outcomes.

To ensure local water utilities deliver safe, secure and affordable water and sewerage services to regional NSW.



YEAR IN REVIEW

2025/26 By the Numbers

90

LWUs represented

100%

membership retention

119

Annual Forum attendees (+27%)

3,774+

inboxes reached through e-news

11

e-news editions published

2

new training products launched

18

WSAA Codes training modules in development

1

LGNSW conference motion passed

1

ARC Training Centre for Climate Resilient Water partner

Strategic Focus Area 1

Address Regulatory Challenges and Promote Innovation

Highlights

- Local Water Utility Reform engagement
- Regulatory & Assurance Framework Review
- Funding reform advocacy
- PFAS and biosolids submissions
- Digital Water Roadmap development commenced

Impact

A stronger regional voice in regulatory reform, water security and funding discussions.

Advocacy

Member Outcomes

Reform



Strategic Focus Area 2

Knowledge Sharing and Knowledge Management

Highlights

- HydroHub expanded
- Publications review commenced
- Communications & Engagement Strategy progressed
- Internal knowledge management improvements implemented
- 11 e-news editions delivered

Impact

Improved access to trusted knowledge, guidance and sector intelligence.



Strategic Focus Area 3

Local Water Utility Risk and Resilience

Highlights

- Continued involvement in TWRRP Phase 3
- Climate resilience initiatives
- ARC Training Centre participation
- Risk reduction and operational support programs

Impact

Supporting long-term resilience, preparedness and risk reduction.



Strategic Focus Area 4

Workforce Development, Skills and Training

Highlights

- Water Operator Safety Card
- WHS Awareness Module
- AquaCard and BrownCard promotion
- Green Card development
- Operator Competency Benchmark
- Workforce Development Roadmap
- 18 WSAA Codes training modules in development

Impact

Building a skilled, connected and future-ready workforce.



Working Together

Collaboration remains central to the Water Directorate's success. During 2025-26, we worked closely with members, government agencies, industry bodies and regional partners, including DCCEEW, LGNSW, WSAA, AWA, Qldwater, WaterRA and Joint Organisations, to share knowledge, build capability and advocate on behalf of Local Water Utilities.

To support delivery of Strategy 2030, the Executive Committee transitioned from six Subcommittees to four

Focus Groups aligned with the Strategic Focus Areas of the Plan. This strengthened strategic alignment, accountability and focus on member outcomes.

Through our Annual Forum, Focus Groups, working groups, training initiatives, knowledge-sharing networks and advocacy activities, we connected Local Water Utilities with expertise, resources, regulators, researchers and industry peers while strengthening the sector's capacity to respond to emerging challenges.

Awards



Dillon Aldridge, a proud Yuin/Kamilaroi man living and working on the Far South Coast with Bega Valley Shire Council, attended Ozwater'26 in Brisbane as the successful recipient of our AWA Ozwater Conference Attendance Award.



Craig Stone from MidCoast Council was awarded the WIOA Operator of the Year 2025. This annual award, sponsored by the Water Directorate, goes to an outstanding operator, awarded at the WIOA NSW Annual Conference and Exhibition Gala Awards Dinner.



The Central NSW Joint Organisation's Water Loss Management and Efficiency Hub project, delivered with NSW DCCEEW and CNSWJO councils, won the Organisational Excellence Award at this year's AWA NSW Heads of Water Gala Event. Congratulations to Meredith Macpherson and the project team.

ANNUAL FORUM

Attendance



119

Forum attendees, consisting of Local Water Utility and Associate members, private sector attendees, sponsors, regulators, speakers and team members.

80

Networking
Event
attendees.

“ Good knowledge sharing on issues with water utilities.”

Frights, Floods and Foresight: Navigating Water Risk Management

The Water Directorate's fourth Annual Forum brought together Local Water Utilities, government agencies, regulators, researchers and industry partners to explore the risks, opportunities and emerging challenges facing the regional water sector. The Forum theme, Frights, Floods and Foresight: Navigating Water Risk Management, aligned strongly with Strategy 2030's focus on risk and resilience, workforce capability, knowledge sharing and innovation.

Strategic Relevance

The Forum addressed many of the issues shaping the future of Local Water Utilities, including:

- Water security and drought resilience
- Financial sustainability and funding models
- Water quality and source water protection
- PFAS and emerging contaminants
- Workforce capability and training
- Risk management and future planning
- Digital transformation and innovation

These issues directly support the Water Directorate's four Strategy 2030 Focus Areas.

Key Discussion Themes

Presentations and panel discussions encouraged delegates to look beyond immediate operational challenges and consider long-term sector resilience.

Highlights included:

- Annette Davison (Risk Edge) examining lessons from major water quality failures worldwide
- Jim Fear (Jacobs) discussing water security and drought preparedness
- Stuart Wilson (WSAA) exploring sector trends and future opportunities
- Jason Ip (Riverina Water) sharing practical utility perspectives
- Fiona Loadsman (WaterNSW) discussing source water protection and catchment management

What We Heard

The Forum reinforced the importance of collaboration, knowledge sharing and practical learning across the regional water sector.

Feedback highlighted strong demand for:

- More interactive discussion formats
- Greater opportunities for audience Q&A
- Additional regional case studies
- Increased regulator participation
- Earlier promotion and release of future Forum programs

These insights have directly shaped planning for the [2026 Annual Forum, From Insights to Action: Digital Water in Practice](#), which will focus on helping Local Water Utilities assess and improve their digital maturity through practical case studies, peer learning and implementation-focused discussions.



“It was a great day. The networking was excellent, the venue is perfect and easy to get to from the train. Great presentations. Just perfect! Well done.”



Very current and topical discussions.

Feedback



98%

Positive rating from 52 survey responses (45% response rate).



ANNUAL FORUM



LOOKING AHEAD

Priorities for 2026/27

The year ahead will focus on turning Strategy 2030 priorities into practical outcomes for members.

A key priority will be supporting Local Water Utility Reform as the NSW Government progresses changes to funding, regulation and strategic planning. The Water Directorate will continue to advocate for practical, locally appropriate solutions while helping members understand, influence and respond to reform as it develops.

The Directorate will also progress development of the Digital Water Roadmap and Readiness Tool, providing Local Water Utilities with practical guidance on improving digital maturity. The Roadmap will bring together case studies, tools, lessons learned and independent advice to help utilities make informed decisions about technology, data and digital investment.

Improving the member experience will remain a strong focus. Building on the Communications and Engagement Strategy, we will continue to strengthen the way we connect with members through more

targeted communications, increased opportunities for engagement and feedback, and greater visibility of member achievements, resources and sector insights.

Events will continue to play an important role in building sector capability and collaboration. Planning is already underway for the 2026 Forum, [From Insights to Action: Digital Water in Practice](#), which will focus on practical digital solutions, real-world case studies and the actions Local Water Utilities can take to progress their digital transformation journey.

Together, these initiatives will help strengthen capability, improve resilience and support thriving regional communities through safe, secure and sustainable water and sewerage services.



INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2026

Water Directorate Incorporated		
Income Statement		
For the year ended 30 June 2026		
Income	2026	2025
Membership fees	721,517	693,972
Sales -Manuals	1,018	4,148
Investment income	32,477	27,738
Other income	106,263	15,348
Total Income	861,276	741,206
Expenditure		
Accounting and audit	10,190	9,650
Advertising and sponsorship	32,550	9,995
Amortisation and depreciation	33,478	34,495
Bank charges	1,877	3,668
Computer expenses	10,448	19,024
Conferences, travel and accommodation	46,795	37,067
Consultants and technical support	77,006	97,125
Employee entitlements	469,328	409,768
Executive committee expenses	8,517	7,151
Insurance	11,711	9,230
Membership fees	-	11,000
Printing, postage and stationery	41,103	22,778
Support service fees	26,000	26,000
Total Expenditure	769,002	696,951
Surplus for the year	92,273	44,255

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 30 JUNE 2026

Water Directorate Incorporated		
Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2026		
	2026	2025
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	1,178,092	1,003,751
Trade and other receivables	481,862	571,644
Prepayments	79,231	57,120
Total Current Assets	1,739,185	1,632,515
Non Current Assets		
Property, plant and equipment	21,256	21,256
Accumulated depreciation	(18,783)	(15,859)
Right-of-use asset	91,661	91,661
Accumulated amortisation	(81,477)	(50,923)
Total Non Current Assets	12,657	46,135
TOTAL ASSETS	1,751,842	1,678,650
Current Liabilities		
Trade and other payables	852,199	840,893
Short-term provisions	60,218	59,314
Lease liabilities	10,703	31,291
Total Current Liabilities	923,120	931,498
Non Current Liabilities		
Lease liabilities	-	10,703
Total Non Current Liabilities	-	10,703
TOTAL LIABILITIES	923,120	942,201
NET ASSETS	828,722	736,449
Equity		
Retained Earnings	736,449	692,194
Current year surplus	92,273	44,255
	828,722	736,449

MEMBERS

Members

Our members comprise of all 90 Council and local water utilities that deliver water and sewerage services across regional and rural NSW.



For links to Member websites, please [CLICK HERE](#)

Associate Members

The Water Directorate's Associate Membership category recognises and builds stronger relationships with water utilities across Australia, as well as water industry partners and Life Members.



For more information on the benefits of Associate Membership, please [CLICK HERE](#)



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