



## 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, present and emerging and extend that respect to all Aboriginal people.



Brewarrina dry stone fish traps (Baiaime's Ngunnhu) have been maintained by Indigenous people for thousands of years, and may be the oldest human construction in the world. The traps consist of river stones arranged to form channels and weirs along 500 metres of the River Barwon, directing fish into areas where they can be easily caught.

Photos by B Hanna copyright Heritage Division, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

## CHAIR'S REPORT



After suffering through the worst drought in more than 120 years of instrumental records, it is hard to see how conditions for local water utilities could have been any more difficult than the last year. In summer, drought conditions peaked with 50 water supply systems at high risk of failure in regional NSW.

Last summer was also one of the worst bushfire seasons on record with 5.4 million hectares burnt, with the disastrous consequence of 25 fatalities and 2,439 homes lost, dwarfing the 2018 California wildfires and 2019 Amazon rainforest fires. This culminated in some water utilities seeking assistance from the Australian Defence Force and mutual assistance from other utilities to maintain water supplies.

There was no rest when rain finally extinguished the fires in February. The much needed return of streamflow brought turbid water from water catchments heavily impacted by drought and fire, creating enormous water quality challenges for some regional water supplies. And then, only weeks later, the world was forever changed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the need to respond to the pandemic, many in our industry have been able to work from home. However, many of our workers have needed to continue working in our communities keeping essential water and wastewater services going for community wellbeing. I want to take the opportunity on behalf of the Water Directorate to echo the Water Services Association of Australia's call to thank all our water industry workers.

Inside the water industry, the pandemic has given us a renewed focus on maintaining the continuity of water services. In our communities, the recognition of the value of 'green' and 'blue' spaces for liveability and wellbeing over and above safe, secure water supplies has never been higher.

Last year, as the drought was yet to reach its peak, I wrote that it was as important as ever for NSW local water utilities to be members of the Water Directorate. There are many lessons to be learned from the past year. We are advocating to increase resilience in local water utilities, diversify our water supplies and for rigorous asset management, so that our local water utilities can continue to provide sustainable water services into the future.

As your Chair, I am a strong advocate for 'All options to be on the table' in diversifying water supplies to provide water security in the long term including purifying recycled water

to supplement water supplies alongside desalination, water efficiency, dams and recycling for non-drinking purposes.

We will continue to advocate on behalf of the regional water sector to address these challenges, harnessing our unique relationship with rural and regional councils. We will continue to provide the technical support for your operations as the peak body for NSW local water utilities.

We continue to respond to the top issues members identified in the survey: a shortage of skilled technical staff, ageing infrastructure, cost of maintenance and cost of compliance with new proposed health-based targets. The coming twelve months is also expected to be a time to plan for the future in regional NSW, through the development of Regional Water Strategies and the State Water Strategy.

As a relatively small industry association, we could not have responded to the challenges of the previous year without the support of partner associations including Local Government NSW, Water Services Association of Australia, Australian Water Association and the Queensland Water Directorate. I want to thank them for their support in achieving our mutual goals.

A huge thank you to the Water Directorate's Executive Officer, Brendan Guiney. I applaud Brendan's dedication and commitment to the Urban Water Industry in Regional NSW. Even more so than before, Brendan's efforts over the last 12 months have enabled the Directorate to go from strength to strength as the primary source of advice for both Local Water Utilities and Government Departments. I have never been more confident that this will continue going forward under Brendan's leadership.

Last, but not least, I want to acknowledge our hardworking Executive Committee, who contribute many hours in-kind to solve our regional water utility issues. Thanks particularly to departing representatives Gnai Ahamat of Snowy Monaro Regional Council and Jim Collins (formerly Bega Valley Shire Council and now with Yass Valley Council). Welcome to Chris Best of Bega Valley Shire Council, Victor Papierniak of Cobar Shire Council, and a warm welcome back to Brett Corven of Eurobodalla Shire Council. The Water Directorate continues to thrive due to the in-kind hours of voluntary work put in by the 18 members of our Executive Committee.

**Wayne Beatty**  
Chair

## EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT



This annual review reflects my first full year as your Executive Officer at the Water Directorate. It has been a great privilege to work with our Chair Wayne Beatty, the Executive Committee, our member utilities, and to partner with fellow associations on the water issues that matter to you.

What a year it has been. For many local water utilities serving regional communities, if the worst drought in recorded history wasn't enough, the experience with bushfire, water quality challenges and COVID must have felt for many like meeting the four horsemen of the apocalypse. The challenges LWUs have faced have been enormous, particularly those with limited resources.

It was a pleasure to work with Stuart Khan of the University of NSW, Erin Cini of the Water Services Association of Australia alongside Carmel Krogh and Jonathon McKeown of the Australian Water Association to bring you a workshop on Bushfire and catchment risk in February to assist with responding to the impacts of fire on water quality.

In prioritising our recovery from drought, fire and flood, the development of measures such as new water storages and supplementary water sources such as stormwater harvesting, groundwater and recycled water is critical to increasing our resilience to withstand future challenges. Investing in water requires regional scale planning and should prioritise economic recovery by focussing on water security, safe drinking water, environmental stewardship, business continuity and service reliability. There needs to be clear levels of service and financial transparency to underpin longer term investment. In doing so, our infrastructure backlogs need to be addressed along with financial sustainability of local water utilities.

Perhaps even more important is the need for rapid and smart investment in not just 'shovel ready projects', but also developing the capacity of our water industry workforce and drive towards best practice business continuity and asset management systems. When considering 'non-asset solutions', there is a significant opportunity to adopt digital water technology in regional water utilities – including automation, remote operation, data analytics, virtual and remote working arrangements, smart sensors and smart metering. The Water Directorate is forming a digital water utilities subcommittee to research and understand what this means for local water utilities in NSW, form new partnerships and facilitate innovative new projects.

Our professional development and training subcommittee continued its work focussing on capacity building for local water utilities. We continue to have concerns about the state of accredited water training for our water operators in future years. In February we held a workshop in partnership with the NSW Public Service Industry Training and Advisory

Body to document concerns from local water utilities and water alliances across regional NSW and are actively communicating those concerns to the NSW government.

Our technical publications subcommittee assisted by Daryl McGregor and Juliet Cobb continued their work distilling water industry knowledge into manuals and technical guidelines for your use. A snapshot of our publications, as well as other events and awards we have participated in, may be found on page 10.

Thanks also to our subcommittee responsible for overseeing the preparation of design and construction codes for water and sewerage networks for regional NSW based upon the Water Services Association of Australia national codes. We will finalise launch of the regional NSW water and sewerage codes in the coming year.

It was a privilege to travel around NSW to meet many of you before circumstances intervened to reduce my opportunity to conduct face-to-face meetings. I met with water utility stakeholders in the Orana, Central NSW, Namoi, and Mid North Coast regions. In June, post COVID, we moved quickly to make savings for our members, reducing our administrative costs by moving our operations completely 'virtual'. We welcome the opportunity to participate in any regional meetings of water managers either virtually or face to face to understand and assist you with your water utility needs.

The Water Directorate is committed to developing relationships with our partners in the water sector: Local Government NSW as our key partner in advocacy; the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment; Office of Local Government; NSW Health, NSW EPA and IPWEA to name but a few. We aspire to see a whole-of-government, collaborative multi-agency approach to water in NSW, and look forward to collaborating with the NSW Government as it develops a State Water Strategy for the first time.

Special thanks to Executive Director of WSAA Adam Lovell and his team, Dave Cameron and his team at the Queensland Water Directorate, and Carmel Krogh, President of the Australian Water Association, for their support in the past year in a very challenging environment.

I look forward to working closely with you all to support, advocate for and enable the needs of local water utilities in NSW.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B Guiney'.

**Brendan Guiney**  
Executive Officer



## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2019–2020

### Attendance Record – Elected Representatives

Name	Council	Region	Attendance
Gnai Ahamat*	Snowy Monaro Regional Council	South East	5/5
Wayne Beatty (Chair)	Orange City Council	Central West	7/7
Chris Best**	Bega Shire Council	South East	2/2
Matthew Cerutti	Kempsey Shire Council	Mid North Coast	1/7
Jim Collins*	Bega Shire Council	South East	0/7
Brett Corven**	Eurobodalla Shire Council	South East	2/2
Russell Deans	Bathurst Regional Council	Central West	6/7
Derek Finnigan	Muswellbrook Shire Council	Hunter	1/7
Graham Gordon	Griffith City Council	South West	7/7
Tracey Hamer	MidCoast Council	Mid North Coast	4/7
Phil Hood	Upper Hunter Shire Council	Hunter	6/7
Jason Ip	Riverina Water County Council	South West	6/7
Graham Kennett	Kyogle Council	North Coast	3/7
Matt Kidd	Shoalhaven City Council	Illawarra	7/7
David Kirby	Brewarrina Shire Council	Orana	4/4
Bruce Logan	Tamworth Regional Council	New England	5/7
Doug Moorby	Narromine Shire Council	Orana	7/7
David Oxenham	Tweed Shire Council	North Coast	6/7
Victor Papierniak**	Cobar Shire Council	Orana	1/2
Geoff Veneris	Goldenfields Water County Council	South West	6/7
Greg Whorlow	Albury City Council	South West	6/7

In a first for the Water Directorate, the Executive Committee met via Zoom for the May 2020 meeting due to travel restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic. As the Constitution does not allow for electronic voting, no decisions were voted on at that meeting.

The Executive Committee welcomed the return of Brett Corven of Eurobodalla Shire Council after a brief absence as well as new members Chris Best of Bega Shire Council and Victor Papierniak of Cobar Shire Council. Thanks go to departing members Gnai Ahamat and Jim Collins for the time and effort they put in to the committee's work.

### Appointed committee members

Mark Hely	Local Government New South Wales	6/7
Councillor Rod Kendall	Local Government New South Wales	5/5

\*Resigned or retired

\*\*Nominated replacement or newly elected representative

### Movember challenge accepted

Pictured: Brendan Guiney, Geoff Veneris, Wayne Beatty





# DROUGHT

**Worst drought** in Northern NSW in **120 years**

More than **50 water supplies** at high risk

Economic costs of failure **too large to contemplate**

Environmental flows and low dam storages **compromise water quality**



## CHALLENGES OF 2019-2020:



# FIRE

Credit: Reuters, Daniel Munoz

**Worst bushfire season** on record

**5.4 million hectares burnt, 25 fatalities, 2,439 homes lost**

Dwarfs 2018 California wildfires and 2019 Amazon rainforest wildfires

Bega Valley Shire Council calls on ADF, Eurobodalla SC and Sydney Water for **help continuing water supply**

This Shoalhaven sewer pumping station was built to resist fire, but had a wood-framed roof. Fires destroyed the building including a \$100,000 electrical switchboard.







# WATER QUALITY

Smoke visible from fires still burning in the Shoalhaven region during the 2019-20 fire season


Credit: NASA's Earth Observatory

**Boil water notices** issued during drought breaking rains

Some catchments have **ongoing water quality challenges** due to 'sterilisation' by high temperature fires

**Torrential rain** extinguished most remaining fires

Many councils that survived drought and bushfire subsequently faced **water quality challenges**



Muddy flooding of the Shoalhaven River that followed the fires. Reports of 500 - 700mm of rain in one week 5-10 February 2020

## DROUGHT, FIRE, FLOOD, PANDEMIC



LWUs forced to respond to COVID-19 **after the impacts of drought, fire and flood**

Regional water utility alliances and county council relationships used to **update business continuity**

Business continuity issues (chemical and other supplies) **common to all utilities in Australia**

Worked with WSAA, AWA, Isle Utilities and regional water alliances on **business continuity and pandemic response**



# PANDEMIC

## INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2020

	2020	2019
	\$	\$
<strong>INCOME</strong>		
Membership fees	542,108	555,670
Sales - Manuals	2,727	4,400
Investment Income	2,647	9,198
Sundry Income	29,253	-
<strong>Total Income</strong>	<strong>576,735</strong>	<strong>569,268</strong>
<strong>EXPENDITURE</strong>		
Accounting and audit	8,220	7,670
Advertising sponsorship	30,486	60,350
Bank Charges	455	1,393
Computer expenses	3,417	3,632
Conferences, travel and accommodation	8,886	4,954
Consultants and technical support	46,689	63,486
Depreciation	1,769	1,682
Executive committee expenses	8,054	21,679
Insurance	7,403	6,618
IPWEA support - Management fees	104,093	101,843
Membership	11,909	10,000
Printing, postage and stationery	2,410	4,997
Salary	258,489	218,095
<strong>Total Expenditure</strong>	<strong>492,280</strong>	<strong>506,399</strong>
<strong>Surplus for the year</strong>	<strong>84,455</strong>	<strong>62,869</strong>



## BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 30 JUNE 2020

	2020	2019
	\$	\$
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Cash at on hand and at Bank	436,609	361,598
Trade and other receivables	445,663	497,379
Prepayments	21,200	17,400
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>903,472</b>	<b>876,377</b>
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>		
Computers	6,217	8,166
Accum Depreciation	3,969	4,149
	<b>2,248</b>	<b>4,017</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>905,720</b>	<b>880,394</b>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Trade and other payables	632,173	635,618
Short-term Provisions	15,921	71,605
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>648,094</b>	<b>707,223</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>648,094</b>	<b>707,223</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>257,626</b>	<b>173,171</b>
<b>EQUITY</b>		
Retained Earnings	173,171	110,302
Surplus YTD	84,455	62,869
	<b>257,626</b>	<b>173,171</b>



## MEMBERS BY REGION

### Central West Region

Bathurst Regional Council  
Blayney Shire Council  
Cabonne Shire Council  
Central Tablelands Water  
Cowra Shire Council  
Forbes Shire Council  
Lachlan Shire Council  
Lithgow City Council  
Oberon Council  
Orange City Council  
Parkes Shire Council  
Weddin Shire Council

### Hunter Region

Muswellbrook Shire Council  
Singleton Shire Council  
Upper Hunter Shire Council

### Illawarra Region

Shoalhaven City Council  
Wingecarribee Shire Council

### Mid North Coast Region

Bellingen Shire Council  
Coffs Harbour City Council  
Kempsey Shire Council  
MidCoast Council  
Nambucca Shire Council  
Port Macquarie-Hastings Council

### New England Region

Armidale Regional Council  
Glen Innes Severn Council  
Gunnedah Shire Council  
Gwydir Shire Council  
Inverell Shire Council  
Liverpool Plains Shire Council

Moree Plains Shire Council  
Narrabri Shire Council  
Tamworth Regional Council  
Tenterfield Shire Council  
Uralla Shire Council  
Walcha Council

### North Coast Region

Ballina Shire Council  
Byron Shire Council  
Clarence Valley Council  
Kyogle Council  
Lismore City Council  
Richmond Valley Council  
Rous County Council  
Tweed Shire Council

### Orana Region

Bogan Shire Council  
Bourke Shire Council  
Brewarrina Shire Council  
Central Darling Council  
Cobar Shire Council  
Coonamble Shire Council  
Dubbo Regional Council  
Gulgandra Shire Council  
Mid Western Regional Council  
Narromine Shire Council  
Walgett Shire Council  
Warren Shire Council  
Warrumbungle Shire Council

### South East Region

Bega Valley Shire Council  
Eurobodalla Shire Council  
Goulburn Mulwaree Council  
Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council



Snowy Monaro Regional Council  
Upper Lachlan Shire Council  
Yass Valley Council

### South West Region

Albury City Council  
Balranald Shire Council  
Berrigan Shire Council  
Bland Shire Council  
Carrathool Shire Council  
Cootamundra - Gundagai  
Regional Council  
Edward River Council  
Federation Council  
Goldenfields Water County Council

Greater Hume Council  
Griffith City Council  
Hay Shire Council  
Hilltops Council  
Junee Shire Council  
Leeton Shire Council  
Lockhart Shire Council  
Murray River Council  
Murrumbidgee River Council  
Narrandera Shire Council  
Riverina Water County Council  
Snowy Valleys Council  
Temora Shire Council  
Wagga Wagga City Council  
Wentworth Shire Council

## 2019–2020 PRIORITY ACTIONS AT A GLANCE

### Publications and digital communications

#### O&M Manuals and Guidelines:

- Design, Operation and Maintenance of Groundwater Bores for Drinking Water
- Water Supply Service Reservoirs
- STP Buffer Zones Land Use Planning Guidelines

#### Weblogs (Blogs):

- Bushfires and drinking water safety
- Toilet paper panic – stick to the three Ps
- Addressing skills gaps in water
- Watching water quality
- Advice on managing impacts of Covid-19 for LWUs in regional NSW
- Covid recovery – regional stimulus
- New research on IWCMs in NSW

#### Monthly newsletters and news updates

### Submissions

- NSW Department of Planning, Industry & Environment – *State Water Strategy*
- NSW Productivity Commission – *Kickstarting the productivity conversation*
- NSW Office of Local Government – *Review of reporting and compliance burdens on local government*
- Infrastructure Australia – *Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019*

### Awards sponsored

- LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards
- WIOA Operator of the Year Award
- AWA Ozwater Conference Attendance Award
- Sam Samra Award
- International Water Centre NSW Water Leadership Program Scholarship Award

### Events

- Water Directorate Forum at LGNSW Water Management Conference 2019, at Albury
- Workshop – *Bushfire and catchment risk* (hosted by UNSW, in partnership with WSAA and AWA)
- Workshop – *Addressing skills gaps in water operator training in NSW* (in partnership with NSW PS ITAB)

### Sponsorship

The Water Directorate is a Silver Member of Water Aid – an international non-profit that works to make clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene normal for everyone in the world.

Brave members of the Executive Committee accepted the Movember challenge to grow their moustaches during the month of November 2019, raising money for Men's Health and Suicide Prevention.





The Water Directorate congratulates our members - LWUs, engineers and operators - for meeting the challenges of 2020 and maintaining essential water and sewerage services to their communities.

Water is essential to support liveable regional communities, economic development and employment and to protect public health and the environment.

Water industry workers provide an essential service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.







**WATER DIRECTORATE INCORPORATED**

Brendan Guiney, Executive Officer

**ADDRESS** PO Box 200, Forster NSW 2428

**MOBILE** 0498 765 055

**EMAIL** [info@waterdirectorate.asn.au](mailto:info@waterdirectorate.asn.au)

**WEB** [www.waterdirectorate.asn.au](http://www.waterdirectorate.asn.au)



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