



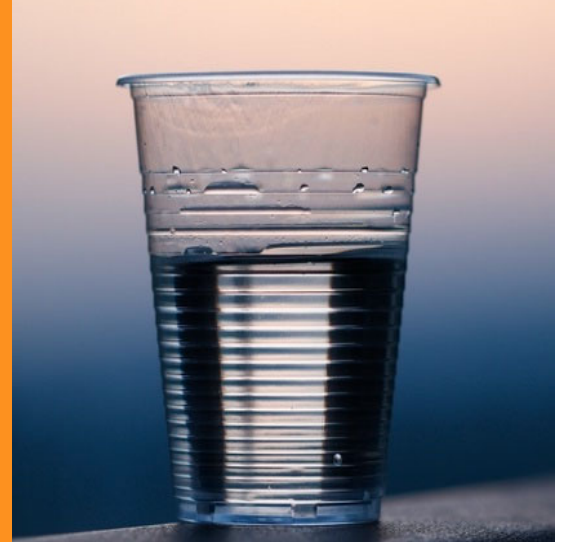
**WATER SERVICES**  
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA



# Communication on Engagement

Water Services Association of  
Australia (WSAA)

Reporting period 1 March 2020 –  
1 March 2022





WATER SERVICES  
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

## About WSAA

The Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) is the peak body that supports the Australian urban water industry. Our members provide water and sewerage services to over 20 million customers in Australia and New Zealand and many of Australia's largest industrial and commercial enterprises.

WSAA facilitates collaboration, knowledge sharing, networking and cooperation within the urban water industry. The collegiate approach of its members has led to industrywide advances to national water issues.



# PART 1 - Statement of Continued Support

June 2022

I am pleased to reaffirm the commitment of the Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) to the United Nations Global Compact and to the ten principles in relation to Human Rights, Labour, Environment and Anti-Corruption, which underpin the accord. This is WSAA's Communication on Engagement with the United Nations Global Compact and we welcome feedback on its contents.

This is our second Communication on Engagement report, and we describe the actions that our organisation has taken since 2020 to support the UN Global Compact and its Principles, as suggested for an organisation such as WSAA. We also commit to sharing this information with our stakeholders, using our primary channels of communication.

WSAA will continue to lead the urban water industry in Australia and New Zealand in using all 17 Goals as a lens to frame the broader contribution urban water makes to a prosperous, sustainable and equitable society.

Kind regards

**Adam Lovell**  
Executive Director  
Water Services Association of Australia



# Part 2: Description of actions

## Background

The water industry provides the most essential of essential services, and we have a tremendous responsibility to support productive, thriving communities. The SDGs offer a unique opportunity for the urban water industry to come together, learn from and contribute to international experience and make a significant positive impact on the community both locally and globally. In addition, water as a sector is singled out with SDG 6: clean water and sanitation. Goal 6 highlights the fundamental role of the water industry's core operations and the contribution its activities make to future prosperity both locally and globally. No other sector is singled out with a Goal in this way. This is part of the reason the Goals resonate with the urban water industry and a key driver to inspire WSAA to lead the industry in promoting and advancing the Goals.

WSAA's goal is increased collaboration between water utilities, governments, regulators, other stakeholders and the community with a focus on creating a sustainable prosperous future. As part of this we hope to achieve:

- Greater awareness of the SDGs with our members (over 100 members in Australia and New Zealand)
- More members signing onto the industry commitment to support and advance the SDGs
- Embedding of the SDGs in water utility organisational strategy and planning.

Achieving the Goals is a long-term project and there are many points at which water businesses can join the journey. Our desire is that WSAA, through our reports and working groups, can encourage collaboration as well as guide utilities to embrace responsibility and demonstrate leadership in meeting the SDGs.

Since the release of our paper - Global Goals for Local Communities: Urban water advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals in August 2017 we have been working to support and promote the SDGs in partnership with utilities, key stakeholders and governments.

Between 2020 and 2022 we have been in a delivery phase, and have released 11 major reports that assist our members to deliver across many of the SDGs, demonstrating continued industry commitment. Below we give an overview of some of them and their impact across our sector and beyond.

Importantly, while supporting the realisation of SDG 6 (Clean Water & Sanitation) is still our industry's core business, the increasing role of the industry in generating clean energy, our progress and [published commitments towards Net Zero emissions](#), and our role in the circular economy now helps further support SDG 7 (Affordable & Clean Energy), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption & Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

## Industry Commitment - ongoing

As at 1 March 2020, 25 WSAA members have signed onto our industry commitment. The most recent member joined the commitment in January 2020.

## **The Commitment**

We support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. As an industry we provide water, sanitation and stormwater services to over 20 million customers and understand that water is critical to sustaining life.

As providers of essential services we want to see the realisation of Sustainable Development Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

We believe universal access to safe water and sanitation is key to creating a better future and we know there is more work to be done.

As an industry we will:

1. Support and promote the 17 Sustainable Development Goals;
2. Support and work with Governments and other agencies to increase the capability and capacity of our region to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6;
3. Commit to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6 within the scope of our operations

WSAA continues to promote the commitment and invites its members to sign on.

## **WSAA publications supporting the SDGs**

Much of the work WSAA does is informed by, aligned to, and helps our sector achieve the SDGs, particularly SDG6, but increasingly also SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption & Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 17 (Partnerships).

During the period 2020-2022 we have released 11 major reports which help drive action towards those SDGs and others. They are listed in date order below.

### **[Integrated Water Management: Principles and Best Practice for Water Utilities](#)**

Published: Oct 2020

SDG alignment: Clean Water & Sanitation (6), Sustainable Cities & Communities (11)

Integrated water management is an approach to planning for water at a whole-of-water-cycle perspective, across all stakeholders with responsibilities in the water cycle, as opposed to siloed, single organisational planning. Outcomes from integrated water management can enable improved delivery of water and sanitation requirements.

Engaged communities, leadership and capacity, as well as institutional, policy and regulatory arrangements that drive collaborative and integrated water cycle planning, can result in improved water infrastructure systems and ecological health of the natural environment. Efficiency and circular economy benefits are also possible.

### **[Discussion Paper: A Sustainable Development Goals Framework for driving](#)**

### **sustainability outcomes for urban water utilities**

Published: Dec 2020

In the last few years, WSAA and its members have sought to understand how current operations and activities of the urban water industry fit within the SDGs. To further this work we released a discussion paper in December 2020, prepared by the Monash Sustainable Development Institute (MSDI), to provide utilities with support through the provision of tools and a framework to measure the impact of utilities against the SDGs going forward.

The framework identifies priority targets and indicators for water utilities to measure their impact on the SDGs now, and “utility of the future” targets and indicators for water utilities to consider their future impact. MSDI and the WSAA Working Group convened for the project also identified a long list of targets that can guide strategic planning and management approaches in ways that support “priority” and “utility of future” indicator outcomes.

At the time of publication this framework was intended to influence a review of the Australian water industry’s National Performance Report (NPR) indicators, to which all water utilities of a certain size threshold report to. The intent was to see whether indicators derived from the SDGs could become part of normal reporting under the NPR. It has proved challenging to do this, however the review project is still ongoing.

### **Towards Resilience: Climate Change and the Urban Water Industry in Australia and New Zealand**

Published: Oct 2021

SDG Alignment: Climate Action (13), Affordable & Clean Energy (7), Sustainable Cities & Communities (11), Partnerships (17)

The IPCC 6th Assessment Report’s stark message, ‘Code red for humanity’ has catapulted climate change to the front pages more than ever before and spurred a new global urgency on adaptation and mitigation. The urban water industry, and indeed the world, is poised at a critical juncture to avert the current trajectory.

This paper represents the first time the full range of impacts of climate change on water utilities in Australia and New Zealand, and the breadth and diversity of their climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience strategies have been brought together in one place. It illustrates how the urban water industry is impacted now by climate change and extreme events, our role in emissions generation, and how we are responding by both reducing our emissions, adapting and becoming more resilient.

### **Water: Fuelling the path to a hydrogen future: The role of the urban water industry in Australia and New Zealand’s renewable energy future**

Published: Oct 2021

SDG alignment: Climate Action (13), Affordable & Clean Energy (7), Sustainable Cities & Communities (11), Partnerships (17)

A hydrogen revolution is gathering pace, with governments and industry bodies announcing a plethora of new hydrogen projects, strategies and policy frameworks.

In the wake of the IPCC 6th Assessment Report and the COP26 global climate conference, the world is fast pivoting towards new, non-fossil-fuel dependent energy

sources.

At this crucial point in time, this paper outlines the basics of hydrogen for the urban water industry, answers some key emerging questions, and points to questions that warrant exploration in the years ahead.

**WSAA Circular Economy papers:**

[Transitioning the water industry with the circular economy](#) (Published Oct 2020)

[Circular Economy Action Plan](#) (Published March 2022)

SDG alignment: Clean Water & Sanitation (6), Affordable & Clean Energy (7), Decent Work & Economic Growth (8), Sustainable Cities and Communities (11), Responsible Consumption & Production (12), Climate Action (13), Life Below Water (14), Life On Land (15)

It's hard to find a more circular business than water. All water on Earth is used and reused in an endless cycle. The concept of the circular economy has been gaining traction locally and globally over the past decade and has many benefits for customers, the broader community, the environment and utilities.

The nature of our operations gives us huge scope to contribute to national and international decarbonisation and sustainability goals, and provide opportunities for others as well.

These papers outline the key building blocks required for a water utility to transition to a circular economy as well as the value proposition and the many benefits to customers and the broader community, the environment and to utilities themselves.

They also collate existing knowledge on the contribution of the urban water industry in a circular economy and recommends the next steps to help utilities begin or further advance their approach. They are supported by 15 international and Australian case studies showcasing the future possibilities for the urban water industry.

Our Circular Economy Action Plan includes a series of actions WSAA will lead to help the water industry in Australia and New Zealand accelerate towards designing out waste, keeping resources in use, and regenerating natural capital.

Other reports we have published that have a strong degree of alignment to one or more of the SDGs includes:

[Willingness to pay for carbon abatement and co-benefits in the Australian urban water sector](#) Published: March 2022. SDG alignment– SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 17 (Partnerships)

[Water industry mental health framework](#) Published Oct 2020. SDG alignment – SDG 3 (Good Health & Wellbeing)

[All options on the table: urban water supply options for Australia](#) Published: Sep 2020. SDG alignment – SDG 6 (Clean Water & Sanitation)

[National good practice operational guidelines for bushfire management for the Australian water industry](#) Published: June 2020. SDG alignment – SDG 6 (Clean Water & Sanitation) and SDG 14 (Life Below Water)

## WSAA Working Groups

WSAA convenes an SDG Community of Practice, which includes representatives from utilities around Australia and NZ. The group shares information through WSAA's member only section on our website.

SDGs are also discussed and initiatives undertaken to progress the SDGs through a number of WSAA member-only groups, including:

- Climate Change, Energy & Environment Network
- Adaptive Planning & Integrated Water Management Network
- Water Quality & Health Network
- Circular Economy Community of Practice
- Customer & Community Engagement Community of Practice (CoP)
- Water Services Sector Group - Modern Slavery Act response
- Supply Chain Working Group
- Asset Managers Network
- Utility Excellence Committee
- People & Culture Committee
- Reconciliation and Cultural Heritage CoP
- Water Security CoP
- Regional Water Working Group
- People and Productivity CoP
- Pride in Water
- Bulk Water Working Group
- Codes Technical Advisory Group
- Product Appraisal Technical Advisory Group

## Australian Government SDG6 Working Group

WSAA is part of the Australian Government SDG6 Working Group along with several of our members. The Working Group has been established to monitor and provide advice at a national level on Australia's achievement of SDG 6.

## SDGs as part of a new National Water Initiative

WSAA is calling for a new National Water Initiative (NWI) in Australia. The NWI is a shared commitment by governments to increase the efficiency of Australia's water use, leading to greater certainty for investment and productivity, for rural and urban communities and for the environment. WSAA is calling for a new NWI as we believe it requires updating and many of the challenges in urban water are the same across Australia. Experience has shown that joint national action is more effective than ad hoc approaches.



Along with recognising future challenges like urban growth and climate change, WSAA is advocating for a new NWI to provide an incentive-based framework for meeting the industry's obligations under the SDGs.

In May 2022 the Australian Federal Election brought a Labor government to power for the first time since 2016. The incoming government has indicated they are willing to work towards a new NWI, so the coming years may yield further opportunities for the SDGs to shape the work of the water sector through this avenue.

# Part 3: Measurement of outcomes

## National recognition of our work

In June 2018 the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) released Australia's Voluntary National Review on progress with the Sustainable Development Goals. The Review showcases the work being done by governments, businesses, communities, individuals and academia.

The DFAT Review noted the "Australian water industry has raised awareness of SDG6 and all the SDGs in its outreach to customers, businesses and among political leaders". It also highlighted work being done by our members.

At the same time, the Australia SDGs website was launched which includes projects from organisations across Australia - including case studies from the WSAA Global Goals Paper.

Unfortunately, there has not been a further review at Commonwealth Government level since 2018.

The Victorian state government referenced our Discussion Paper: A Sustainable Development Goals Framework for driving sustainability outcomes for urban water utilities in their Guidelines for the Development of Urban Water Strategies (2021).

## International recognition of our work

Following the release of our reports the efforts of the water industry have been acknowledged overseas. DANVA, the WSAA equivalent in Denmark, translated and used the WSAA Global Goals for Local Communities document to generate their own water sector program.

UK utilities, including Anglian Water and Severn Trent, have specifically cited the leadership of the Australian water sector in also committing to the SDGs (in total or in part).

## Whole of industry commitment

25 WSAA members have now signed up to the WSAA industry commitment to meet SDG 6 and advance all Goals within the scope of their operations.

## Members joining the UN Global Compact Network

We have seen individual utilities join the UN Global Compact Network and sign up to the Global Compact including Yarra Valley Water, South East Water, Melbourne Water, Greater Western Water and SA Water.

## Contact Details

WSAA welcomes the opportunity to discuss this Communication on Engagement further.

If there are any details you wish to follow up on please contact:

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