

AUSTRALIAN WATER

ASSOCIATION

MEDIA STATEMENT

AWA invited to join industry advisory group reporting to COVID-19 Coordination Commission

14 April 2020

The Australian Water Association (AWA) recognises the broad impacts on members, other sectors and the community as a result of COVID-19. AWA is Australia's peak national water Association and is in a unique position to communicate the views and recommendations from the water industry to Government.

Our membership includes utilities, contractors, consultants, and suppliers to the water industry. As such we need to ensure that the COVID-19 concerns and recommendations of these different but interconnected sectors of the industry are reaching Government throughout this crisis.

To facilitate this conduit to Government, the Association's President Carmel Krogh OAM and CEO Jonathan McKeown have been invited to join the industry advisory group called the Utilities Work Stream, reporting to the COVID-19 Coordination Commission. The Commission was established by the Prime Minister to provide advice on a coordinated approach to the COVID-19 crisis and the economic recovery phase that will follow.

AWA's representation is to bring the views of the water industry to the Commission who then advises the National Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister. AWA is involved with COVID-19 meetings twice a week to discuss developments on the crisis.

AWA is also in weekly contact with the Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment, the lead Commonwealth Agency for the water sector. In addition, AWA is being briefed on the Water - National Coordination Mechanism (NCM) designed to operationalise the National Communicable Diseases (CD) Plan and effectively coordinate Commonwealth agencies' planning and preparedness measures for the non-health impacts of COVID-19. The Water NCM is managed by the Department of Home Affairs.

AWA understands that the Commonwealth Government is well aware that the supply of potable water and wastewater services remain essential for the proper functioning of society. However, we understand that some of our members have experienced issues with employees being hindered or sometimes prevented from carrying out tasks due to the restrictions in place to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Whilst Queensland has declared the water industry to be an 'Essential Service', other jurisdictions have a less defined approach. Despite varying approaches, many practical steps have already been taken by the water industry to ensure continuity of services.

The Association has established a mechanism for members to share their own COVID-19 issues and recommendations throughout the crisis. All future requests for members feedback and information to share with Government will be updated on the Association's website.

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About the Australian Water Association

With a membership of over 5,000 individual and corporate members, the Australian Water Association is Australia's biggest water network inspiring and driving a sustainable water future. www.awa.asn.au