



**AUSTRALIAN  
WATER**

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ASSOCIATION

**Submission to Productivity Commission  
National Water Initiative Inquiry**

Prepared by the Australian Water Association  
for the Productivity Commission

February 2024



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## Key observations and recommendations

When consulted for this submission, Australian Water Association (AWA) members have noted positive progress in areas such as water access entitlements and planning framework, water markets and trading and water resource accounting.

Conversely, **members have strongly highlighted Integrated Water Management (IWM) as an area that needs more work.** They also identified best practice water pricing and institutional arrangements, urban water reform and knowledge and capacity building as areas where progress has been slow.

**Climate change, and particularly the impacts of climate variability, was identified as the key challenge facing the water sector.**

There is also strong support for better engagement with Traditional Owners in decision-making and incorporation of First Nation's perspectives in water management and the importance of equity of access. These views are also reflected in AWA's strategic plan, which was prepared by and for members to set the direction of the association.

Many of the observations and recommendations shared by AWA members regarding areas of progress, key challenges, gaps, and opportunities closely reflect the those made in the Productivity Commission National Water Reform 2020 Inquiry Report.

**One clear additional area where members would like to see reform, however, is in relation to the formation of an independent and transparent national water advisory or oversight body.**

Water plays a key role in Australia's response to climate change. Water security is threatened by more extreme weather events as droughts and floods impact on both the quantity and quality of water available.

Water is also an essential ingredient to ensuring community and business climate resilience in the energy and agriculture sectors. It is therefore vital that water is front and centre in any national discussions and decisions on our nation's response to climate change.

The National Water Commission (NWC) provided independent, evidence-based advice to the Federal government thereby supporting it in setting a well-informed national direction and position on water. This advice and a clear national position have been missing since the NWC was abolished and has meant that water is not being considered adequately in relation to government actions and discussions regarding responses to climate change.

Australia endorsed the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015 thereby committing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Apart from Goal 6 (Clean water and sanitation) water management also contributes to progress on many of the other goals including Goal 3 (Good health and well-being), Goal 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) and Goal 15 (Life on land).

The Bureau of Meteorology via the National Performance Report is reporting on progress on Goal 6; however there are reporting gaps and a lack of a clearly articulated national action plan on how Australia will address any shortfalls in achieving this goal.

There appears to be an over-reliance on the past successes of the NWI rather than a focus on what further improvements and reforms are required.

A national water body could play an important role in ensuring Australia is confident in delivering on its commitment to SDG Goal 6.

AWA members agree that the National Water Initiative (NWI) provided an important vehicle for water reform over the first decade of its existence however progress has stalled since the NWC was abolished in 2014. This is particularly noticeable in relation to IWM with the various jurisdictions making little headway on removing the policy, regulatory and funding barriers previously identified by the Productivity Commission.

There is no national oversight or transparent reporting on why progress has not been made.

The current reliance on water ministers convening periodically, triennial reviews and the National Water Reform Committee to drive reform progress is not working. Meetings between water ministers appear to be predominately related to the management of the Murray Darling Basin and there is also a concerning lack of transparency regarding the work being done by the National Water Reform Committee.

The National Water Grid Authority is a positive example of cooperation and coordination on water at a national level. The framework and associated administration manual developed by the authority provide clear and rigorous guidelines for investment in water infrastructure and the authority provides oversight and transparent reporting on the progress of the projects funded.

A similar organisation with a broader scope that also funds and assesses technical, policy and planning, environment, behaviour change and efficiency solutions could help guide, incentivise, and monitor progress across the full suite of water reforms.

In this decade that matters, we have no time to waste and while progress has been made it is imperative that we accelerate change and have the necessary leadership to take action in the best interest of our nation.

**To achieve intergenerational equity we need to be bolder and make a more consistent and concerted effort together across all jurisdictions than we have in the last decade.**

We are confident that with courageous leadership and by working together it is possible to accelerate the change required by building on progress made and addressing the shortfalls with the best science, engagement with communities and First Nations people, a diverse range of solutions and transparency.

## **Introduction – AWA and our members**

### **Who we are**

The Australian Water Association (AWA) is Australia's largest water network. We provide individuals with career enrichment and organisations with business development opportunities as we share information and knowledge, connect members with industry and stakeholders, and inspire a sustainable water future.

Through our extensive range of technical seminars, courses and conferences, we provide a forum for debate and best practice dissemination at a state, national and international level.

AWA is committed to building Australia's water capabilities to maintain its position as a world leader in water management.

AWA is a leader in international collaboration and networking in water, delivering a range of initiatives that showcase learnings from Australia's water reform journey, and create opportunities for the Australian water sector.

### **Our members**

AWA's members cover every facet of the water sector, including professionals and practitioners working in utilities, government agencies, engineering, urban design and planning, science, research, academia, energy, resources, manufacturing, mining and agriculture.

### **Our purpose and focus areas**

AWA aims to inspire and drive a sustainable water future where water is recognised by all as essential to economic prosperity, health, the environment, and First Nations' connection to Country.

AWA's strategic plan, which was developed by and for our members, includes descriptions of how the association will support members to:

- Connect their expertise with need and opportunity in regional and remote Australia
- Contribute to meeting the SDGs.
- Promote water resilience and sustainability to a wider audience and encourage investment in this area, increase engagement with schools, community groups and media and promote the cultural and economic value of water and its contribution to liveability.
- Develop content for schools that includes First Nations water management and connection to Country.

## Background – our 2017, 2020 and 2024 submissions

AWA provided submissions to the Productivity Commission's Draft Report in 2017 and 2020.

Despite different contexts, the submissions to the 2017 and 2020 National Water Initiative (NWI) reviews underscored the importance of sustained national water reform in Australia.

The 2020 submission emphasised the recent challenges posed by bushfires, droughts, and the COVID-19 pandemic, outlining six key reform themes: urban water management, rural water issues, groundwater management, community engagement, research and development, and a revitalised national reform agenda.

The 2017 submission acknowledged the progress made through previous water reforms but expressed concern about backsliding against commitments in the previous review. It recommended rural and urban water management reforms and proposed the establishment of a national water authority to implement a national water plan to regulate water trading and manage water security.

Both submissions advocated for transparent monitoring, regulation, and compliance mechanisms and stress the importance of community engagement and sustainable water management.

The 2020 submission particularly emphasises the integration of bottom-up and community-based adaptation, including input from First Nations communities, into water governance arrangements. Additionally, it highlighted the need for increased investment in research and development to address emerging challenges like climate change and pandemics.

Both submissions emphasised the need for renewed focus and collaboration in Australia's water sector.

See Appendix 1 (Overview of AWA submission to the 2017 National Water Initiative review) and Appendix 2 (Overview of AWA submission to the 2020 National Water Initiative review).

**To prepare the 2024 submission, AWA supported an industry wide member engagement process (See Appendix 3 – Member Engagement Approach). This submission has been informed by member surveys, focus groups, and interviews.**

**Appendix 4 contains a Selection of Member Survey Responses.**

## Areas where progress is noted

Since the inception of the NWI, AWA notes positive progress of the following:

### **National framework, standards, and guidelines**

The creation of a national framework, standards and guidelines and recognition of the need for cross border management of water through the NWI was a big step forward, though implementation has been slow.

- Early reforms in the areas of universal metering, cost reflective pricing, independent economic regulation, and federal leadership from the former National Water Commission (NWC) were highlighted as positive steps.
- Establishment of a national framework for water management, along with the implementation of statutory water plans in most regions, indicated progress in providing a structured approach to water resource management.
- The NWI provided a good platform for a national conversation about water, emphasising the importance of fostering dialogue and discussions on water-related issues.

### **Water resource management**

The NWI has resulted in actions that have led to improved understanding of water resources, tracking and accounting of use. The development of water allocations and market mechanisms to support water resource management has also been positive.

- Greater awareness of the importance of water management in Australia was noted, leading to significant improvements and better cohesion. However, it was highlighted that challenges, especially related to population growth, climate change impacts, and environmental restoration, are growing.
- Functioning rural water markets, acknowledgment of environmental needs, and better-functioning urban water markets and trading mechanisms promoting flexibility in water allocation and distribution, were mentioned as positive outcomes.

### **Environmental water allocations and water efficiency and management**

There has been progress on environmental water allocations and improvements in water efficiency and management in both rural and urban areas, but more work is needed to ensure these are prioritised.

- The NWI was acknowledged for raising the bar and clarifying expectations around water management. Key outcomes include clearer guidance for water allocation planning, recognition of the importance of community engagement, including with First Nations communities, and better acknowledgment of the value of water for the environment and ecosystem services/public benefit outcomes.
- Sustained focus on water efficiency, more sophisticated water modeling approaches, recognition of the importance of groundwater resources, and understanding the link between ground and surface water were noted as achievements.
- The NWI was credited with raising awareness of the importance of water management, particularly in the context of potential water scarcity. It is

acknowledged that despite progress, challenges remain in addressing a growing population, climate change impacts, and the need for environmental restoration.

- Adoption of uniform standards and efficient use of freshwater were highlighted as positive outcomes, indicating progress in establishing consistent and effective water management practices.

### **Community engagement**

Community engagement in planning and decision-making has improved, but there is still a need to increase transparency and water literacy to protect and extend gains.

- There has been an emphasis on customer-focused outcomes, indicating a shift towards recognising the importance of end-users in decision-making processes.
- Improved communication and engagement by water service providers with customers and stakeholders, along with a growing understanding of water resources and improved tracking and accounting of water use, were mentioned as achievements.

### **Engagement with Traditional Owners**

There has been some demonstrable progress in this sphere, but more is required.

- It was noted that there has been a stronger focus on First Nations communities and outcomes, emphasising the importance of recognising and addressing the specific water-related needs of First Nations communities.
- Water entitlements were raised as important to highlight.

## **Areas where progress has been inadequate**

Despite the positive progress, AWA acknowledges that not all jurisdictions are working towards the agreed objectives and outcomes of the NWI, and in some cases are moving away from the principles, objectives, and key outcomes.

AWA notes the following:

### **Integrated Water Management (IWM)**

Policy, planning and financial barriers to IWM have not been addressed, for urban stormwater and flood management in particular. The disconnect between urban growth planning and water planning is also impacting on the affordability of servicing growing populations.

- Water resource accounting was noted to have regressed, with increased conflict among stakeholders and misunderstandings about water management principles. This was attributed to complexity of water management and governance arrangements, changes in personnel and focus of responsible agencies, and the reliance on stakeholder collaboration and goodwill to apply IWM approaches.
- Water access entitlements and planning were identified as obstacles to implementing water banking and managed aquifer recharge as tools for drought resilience.

### **Pace and flexibility of reform**

Progress varies between states, with reform being slow in some jurisdictions or inconsistently applied or even reversed in others.

- There is a need for 'fit for purpose' approaches to balance the heavy focus on technical rather than risk-based compliance.
- There is still a lot of work to be done around the Murray Darling Basin.

### **Capacity to keep pace and afford upgrades**

- The ability for utilities to manage and maintain their assets and services to meet compliance obligations while remaining financially viable is an ongoing challenge. Doubts about the sustainability of long-term pricing were raised, emphasising concerns about cost escalation, aging infrastructure, and an approaching 'asset maintenance cliff'.

### **Innovation and capacity**

Investment in research, innovation, capacity building and information sharing has varied across jurisdictions, resulting in significant risks for water service delivery.

Challenges include an aging workforce and skills shortage, aging infrastructure, and decision-making that is not informed or appropriate due to a lack of water expertise and knowledge within organisations and across sectors.

### **Urban Water Planning and Management**

- Urban water planning is not adequately considering all key aspects such as raw source water protection, stormwater, and flood management as managing these is often spread across various agencies. These were identified as critical challenges for urban water businesses nationally.
- Urban water planning was urged to expand into catchment level planning that considers nature-based solutions; blue-green infrastructure solutions; or even non-engineering solutions to enable alternative integrated options with legislative frameworks that foster outcomes to meet community and environmental needs.
- The value of recycling water that would otherwise be seen as wastewater for different purposes including for purified recycled water for drinking was acknowledged.

### **First Nations Water Security and Entitlements**

- Water quality for several remote and First Nations communities is still unsatisfactory.
- A lack of progress on First Nations water entitlements was noted, with recommendations for increased access to water entitlements for productive and cultural use.
- Elevating the value of cultural caring for Country in outcomes for downstream urban communities through greater First Nations water management support and integration into approaches was recommended.

### **Environmental Water Flows and Entitlements**

- There remains a lack of clear and nationally compatible characteristics for secure water access entitlements.
- Environmental flows were not seen as having been prioritised and challenges in securing water for the environment were highlighted.
- There is a need to ensure a minimum volume of water to meet expectations for economic, environmental, social and cultural purposes.

## **Key water security and management challenges**

### **Climate variability and extremes**

Longer, more frequent, and variable droughts, floods, and extreme weather events is the most significant challenge impacting water security and management. Climate change also threatens terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity.

### **Decision-making**

There is a lack of courageous decision-making in times of climate and economic uncertainty. Capital investment decisions in a climate variable context are inherently challenging. There is a need for courageous leadership and funding in this context.

With long implementation timelines for often unpopular critical infrastructure projects this leadership is necessary to ensure water security in variable climate contexts for the longer term.

Balancing water availability, access and use with affordability while also achieving goals such as net-zero carbon emissions, which may require upfront capital investment, needs ongoing consideration.

The production cost of manufactured water such as desalinated and recycled water which is energy intensive is generally higher than water sourced from dams or rivers, for example. Ultimately, these costs will be passed onto customers.

### **First Nations Water**

Historical and current issues, including around water rights, service provision and access to clean and safe drinking water for First Nations people and communities, needs to be addressed.

### **Population growth and water source alternatives**

The rapid increase in population particularly in our major cities, and a reluctance by governments and communities to consider all options, including purified recycled water for drinking, continues to add pressure to managing finite water resources.

Political will and a lack of consistent effort to improve water literacy around the safe use of purified recycled water means that when we need to find secure water sources for a growing population dams, groundwater, desalination, and recycled water for non-drinking purposes are put forward as the leading options.

### **Regional and remote communities**

The lack of adequate service delivery, particularly of safe drinking water in regional and remote communities, has ongoing significant health impacts.

## Recommendations

Water sector reform must be carried out in concert with Australia's initiatives towards climate adaptation and resilience. These initiatives, designed to ensure the Australian Government achieves its UN SDG and COP commitments, as well as ensuring the future health and wellbeing of the Australian population and environment, require whole of government collaboration and consideration of water sector management and reform.

To further progress the positive impacts of the National Water Initiative (NWI), AWA recommends focusing on the following three priority areas for policy development:

1. **Improved National Level Articulation of Integrated Water Management (IWM)** – as climate change and population growth continue to place pressure on assets and water supplies, IWM solutions will play a crucial role in achieving water security for communities, industries and the environment. There is a need to broaden traditional IWM approaches beyond recycled water to include stormwater, groundwater, and environmental flows.
2. **Focus on Climate Variability** – greater focus and cross-sectoral planning and oversight of the impacts of increasing, and more variable, floods, droughts, and extreme weather events.
3. **Independent Oversight and Advice** – to build consistency and connectivity between jurisdictions, reinvigorate action on water reform and effectively incorporate water into climate change responses, AWA recommends an independent entity with longevity and the ability to develop deep contextual understanding be set up to oversee water reform and provide advice and guidance on water management. Funding will need to be made available to incentivise adoption of innovative solutions or new approaches.

To enable continued improvements in these areas, further research and cross-sector collaboration is crucial. As Australia's largest water network, and in line with the vision outlined in [AWA's Strategy'25](#), AWA welcomes the opportunity to support the Australian Government in the development and implementation of future reforms.

In line with Strategy'25, AWA is committed to addressing climate impacts and improving liveability, contributing to meeting Australia's SDG commitments, and creating a culturally safe space for the sharing of First Nations water management practices, and celebrating collaborations that deliver positive change.

These focus areas in turn contribute to ensuring Australia's commitments made at previous COPs, the UN SDGs, and the health and wellbeing of the Australian communities and environment. AWA welcomes further dialogue and collaboration on the contents of this submission – without deep, coordinated, cross-sectoral reform, Australia's national goals, and international commitments are at risk of failing to be realised.

## Recommendation 1: Improved National Level Articulation of Integrated Water Management (IWM)

There have been significant barriers to IWM in Australia. IWM is not widely understood outside the water sector. This lack of clarity across decision-making levels highlights the critical need for greater awareness to drive action.

As climate change and population growth continue to place pressure on assets and water supplies, IWM solutions will play a crucial role in achieving water security for communities, industries and the environment.

For progress to take place, there is a need to broaden traditional IWM approaches beyond recycled water to include stormwater, groundwater, and environmental flows.

To unlock further progress in IWM in Australia, AWA recommends the following:

### **Strengthening governance and reducing legislative barriers/ developing consistency with regulation and practice**

Fragmented governance responsibilities have led to monitoring and resourcing challenges. Legislative barriers have also restricted funding for IWM. To reduce challenges such as these, measures need to be developed to:

- Align regulations to increase collaboration and prevent conflicting siloed agendas (the lack of progress on implementation is strongly linked to governance).
- Create governance mechanisms to reduce conflict between state boundaries and surface and ground water catchments, increasing recognition of environmental water and the link between surface and groundwater.
- Make evident the crucial link of IWM impacts and benefits to climate change response and mitigation strategies, and water's essential role in adaptation.
- Establish clear and standardised reporting frameworks by requiring jurisdictions to transparently report commitments, re-commitments, and how they are meeting commitments.
- Further development and wide distribution of best practices: Guidelines for practitioners to ensure processes and outcomes are aligned across Australia.
- Strengthen resilience and value-based planning, with an emphasis on risk management and catchment-wide insurance.
- Consider international benchmarks and tracking strategies for IWM.

### **New technology and human resource capacity:**

- Increase investment in decision support tools for collaboration and informed investment decisions.
- Encourage piloting, testing and implementation of new technologies.
- Assess capacity and skills gaps and develop a water sector road map to ensure long term human resources capacity.

## Recommendation 2: Focus on Climate Variability

With increased climate variability, the challenges of managing finite water resources while coping with a rapid increase in population are growing. In this context, there must be a shift to longer planning timelines to ensure adequate water security for economic, environmental, social, and cultural purposes into the future.

To support management of these challenges in urban, rural, regional, and remote Australia, AWA recommends the following:

### **Broadening the definition of impacts of climate variability:**

- The NWI Renewal Advice 6.2 on Water Planning focuses on drought conditions. This needs to broaden to include floods, and other extreme weather events.

### **Support for research and modelling:**

- Allocate funds for research and modelling to develop comprehensive responses to climate variability, and consideration of population increase and its impact on water management.

### **Consistency and minimum standards:**

- Establish uniform minimum standards and guidelines across jurisdictions to enhance water security, resilience, and community expectations.

### **Community engagement and partnerships:**

- Promote engagement and partnerships within communities to clarify roles and foster effective leadership in addressing climate variability.
- Emphasis on water as a cross-cutting issue requiring a comprehensive approach beyond the NWI, including First Nations water rights.

### **More water resilient communities:**

- With increased drought, flood, and extreme weather event intensity resulting from climate change, and the implications of population increase, there is a need to increase and diversify our climate-independent water sources and decrease existing licensing for water extraction from aquifers and rivers.
- Australia's water, wastewater and stormwater management practices and infrastructure will need to adaptive and more resilient to these extreme events so that the impacts on communities are managed and their recovery is quicker and less costly.

### **Focus on water quality:**

- Emphasise management of water quality, especially during flooding, to mitigate environmental and health impacts.

### **Integration of energy and water impacts:**

- For manufactured water and energy sources, there is a need to consider interrelated effects of energy and water impacts in reform agendas.

### Recommendation 3: Independent Oversight and Advice

During the consultative processes conducted for this submission, there were regular references to a need for an independent body to oversee and drive the national water reform process while providing advice and guidance on water matters.

AWA does not feel that the current model is effective in progressing the NWI, where governance relies principally on state water ministers and the National Water Reform Committee which is made up of senior officials from Australian Government and all state and territory water agencies.

The lack of information or reports on meetings or discussions held by these stakeholders also contributed to concerns about the effectiveness and transparency of the current approach.

There was acknowledgement that progress on water reform would also need Australian Government leadership in providing improved funding, frameworks, and support to state governments. Reference was made to the National Water Grid Authority as an example of an effective national funding mechanism for water related activities.

Members also discussed the importance of integrating any water sector reform in Australia with Australia's UN SDG commitments, as well as with other national climate adaptation and resilience initiatives, since water contributes to or is a key ingredient in sustainable and resilient energy production, economic growth, human and environmental health, and liveability.

To strengthen water sector governance in Australia, AWA recommends the following:

#### **Independent oversight:**

- An independent entity is required to oversee and report on water reform progress.
- Compliance requirements should include incentives and consequences to drive necessary action.
- This should be a permanent body with the ability to develop a deep contextual understanding of the water sector and capable of providing technical and regulatory advice and guidance on water management at a national level.

#### **Innovation incentives and funding reform:**

- Funding models for innovative, change making projects could provide incentives for the adoption of new technologies or approaches.
- The National Water Grid Authority is a positive example of cooperation and coordination on water at a national level. The framework and associated administration manual developed by the authority provide clear and rigorous guidelines for investment in water infrastructure and the authority provides oversight and transparent reporting on the progress of the projects funded. A similar organisation with a broader scope that also funds and assesses technical, policy and planning, environment, behaviour change and efficiency solutions could help guide, incentivise, and monitor progress across the full suite of water reforms.

## **Appendix 1 – Overview of AWA submission to the 2017 National Water Initiative (NWI) review**

The 2017 submission highlighted the progress Australia had made through nationally coordinated water reforms since the 1994 National Competition Policy and under the NWI and noted evidence of slow progress or backsliding against agreed NWI commitments since the National Water Commission's previous review in 2014.

The AWA's recommendations included:

### **Rural water reform**

- a. Moving towards a national water market for water that avoids the variants and inconsistencies of the current local markets that are driven by contrasting value drivers.
- b. The prevention of unwarranted market interventions by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder.
- c. Timely and transparent price registers and settlement processes
- d. Recognising water as a tangible asset.
- e. The role of a national water authority as national water trading regulator.

### **Urban water reform**

- a. Efficient and effective service delivery.
- b. Aligning institutions and regulatory frameworks to reduce costs, both in the management of regulation itself but also to encourage productivity and innovation in the sector.
- c. Access to capital and private sector investment to service expanding populations, especially growth areas on the fringe of cities and in developing regional centres.
- d. A customer focused sector, an engaged community through giving a greater voice to customers through customer choice in pricing and service delivery.
- e. Enabling regional and remote communities to have access to safe, secure, reliable and healthy water.

### **National water agency**

The AWA also recommended that a national water authority be established to implement and manage a national water plan approved by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to provide water security and sustainable water management.

## **Appendix 2 – Overview of AWA submission to the 2020 National Water Initiative (NWI) review**

The 2020 submission underscored that despite the cross-sectoral importance of water and significant progress after decades of water reforms, recent challenges including bushfires, droughts, and the COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted a critical need for sustained focus and reform.

The submission outlined six key themes for further reform, reflecting the insights of water professionals from across the water sector:

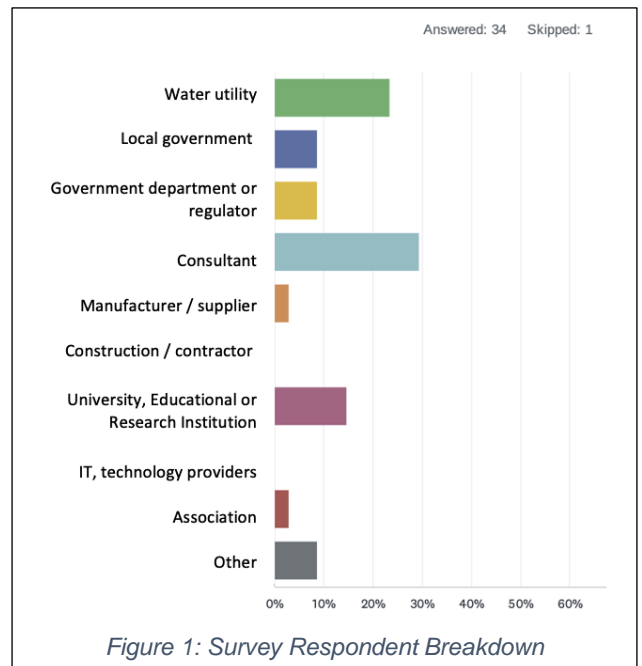
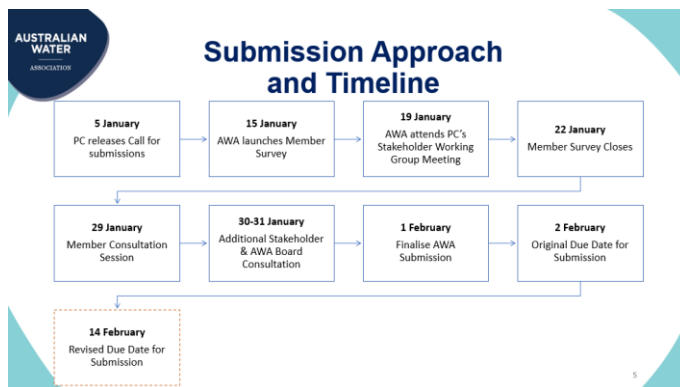
- a. **Urban water:** Highlighted the importance of comprehensive urban water management strategies, advocating for diversification of water supply sources, resilience-building measures, sustainability integration, collaborative partnerships, and consistent regulations to ensure equitable access and quality standards across all communities.
- b. **Rural water:** Indicated that efforts to implement real-time monitoring and measuring of water extraction in the Murray-Darling Basin had been sluggish and inconsistent, highlighting the need for transparent monitoring, regulation, compliance, and enforcement mechanisms.
- c. **Groundwater management:** Recommended that efforts to address groundwater management issues included the establishment of clearer accounting and monitoring systems for groundwater and surface water interactions, necessitating detailed frameworks for proper water volume tracking and regulation of return flows and transfers between sources.
- d. **Community engagement in water management and planning:** Outlined the need to focus on integrating bottom-up and community-based adaptation, including input from First Nations communities, into enhanced water governance arrangements to foster sustainable management of water resources and bolster community confidence.
- e. **Research and development:** Recommended sustained investment in multi-disciplinary research and development across various facets of the water sector as crucial for fostering innovation, efficiency, and adaptive responses to emerging challenges like climate change and pandemics, while also supporting economic and public benefits.
- f. **National reform agenda:** Advocated for a revitalized NWI as essential to addressing new risks and opportunities in Australia's water sector, necessitating a renewed leadership role from the Australian Government and the establishment of a national reform agency to oversee implementation.

To enable these reform themes, the submission advocated for greater national collaboration, emphasising the necessity of effective leadership and coordination across government levels to ensure the success of future reforms.

## Appendix 3 – 2024 Member Engagement Approach

This submission was compiled following an industry-wide AWA member engagement process involving the following steps:

1. On release of the call for submissions by the Productivity Commission on January 5, 2024, AWA distributed a survey to members to inviting input into the National Water Initiative (NWI) review.
2. AWA then attended the Productivity Commission’s Stakeholder Working Group meeting on January 19, 2024.
3. Based on member survey responses, AWA then developed key themes for discussion and facilitated focus group and interview consultations with AWA water industry leaders and AWA Board Directors.
4. AWA then further synthesised key themes from the data collected, and developed a draft submission for feedback from the AWA Board and contributing AWA Members.
5. After revision based on AWA Board and member feedback, AWA finalised the document and submitted to the Productivity Commission.



### Survey Responses,

35 survey responses were received and collated by AWA to inform the development of further focus groups, interviews, and the submission.

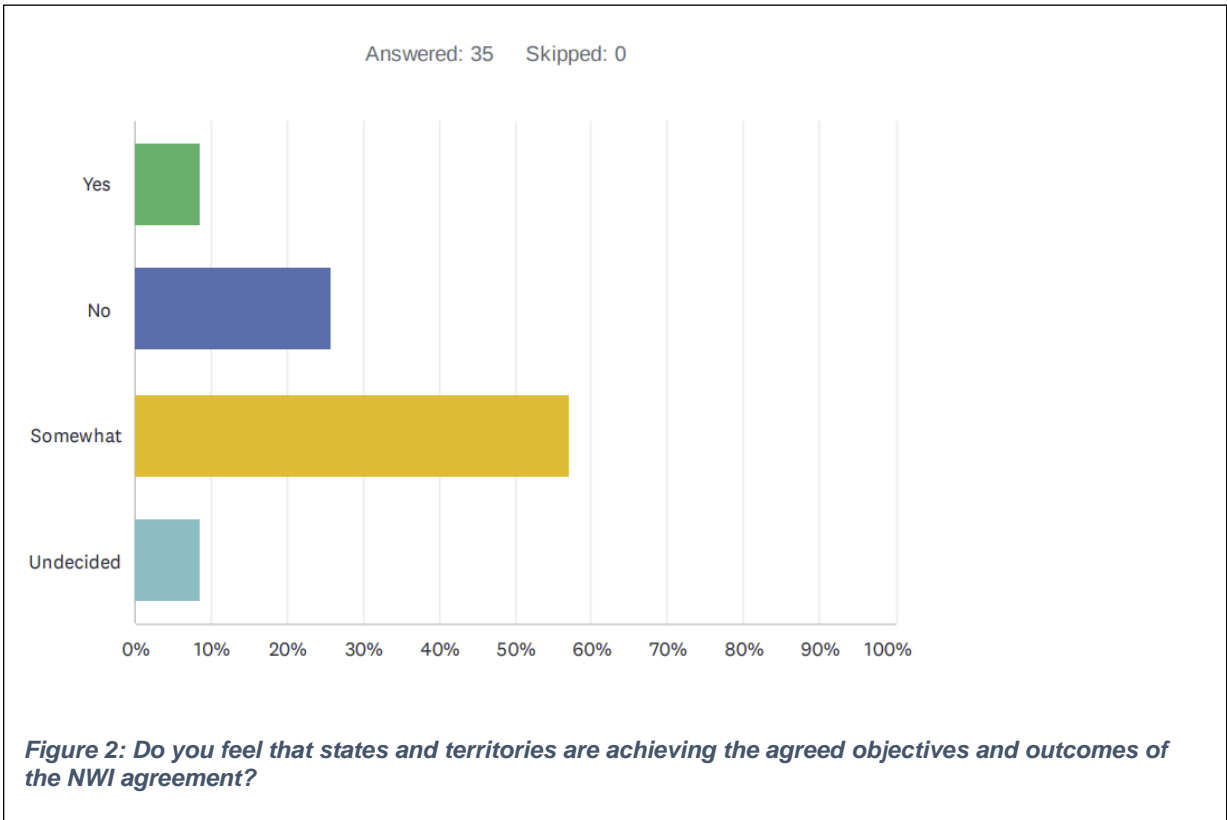
### Focus Groups, and Interviews

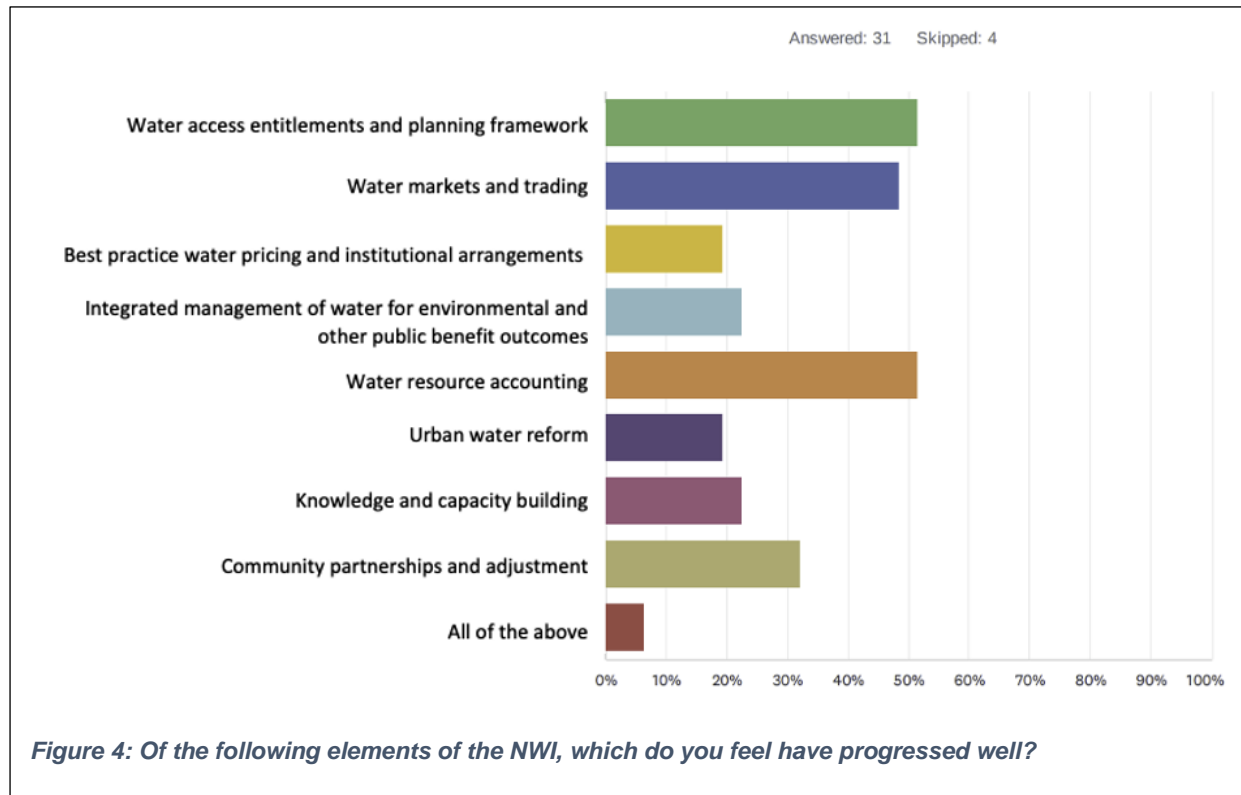
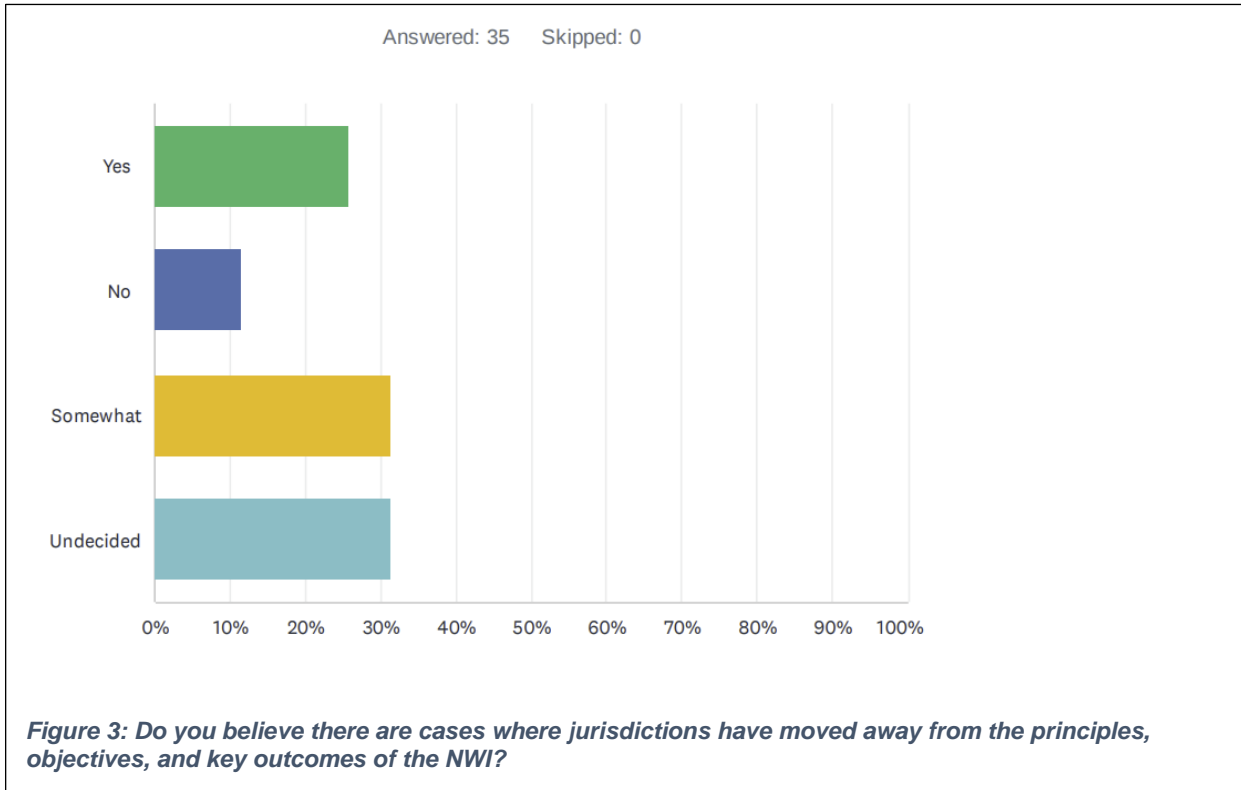
36 AWA Members joined the Focus Group Consultation, and follow up consultations were held with seven AWA Board Directors. Following the focus group, four AWA Members provided additional contributions.

## Appendix 4 – 2024 Selection of Member Survey Responses

Areas where progress is noted

### High level survey responses





## Areas where progress has been inadequate

### High level survey responses

