

WATER PRIORITIES FOR THE 48TH PARLIAMENT

How the water sector can
support national goals



1. Water needs to be a national priority:

- Australia has either too much or too little water and the economic impact of climate change is clearly evident through a range of extreme extremes. Water requires Commonwealth attention at the highest level.

2. Commit to finalising the National Water Agreement:

- Good progress was made on developing a National Water Agreement in the 47th Parliament. Now it should be finalised, including developing more ambitious goals. The current National Water Initiative is out of date and out of ideas. Finalising the Agreement is likely to require incentives for State and Territories to sign on.

3. Support investment in water to meet housing targets:

- Water bills have been flat in Australia for the past 12 years while energy prices have risen over 40 per cent. Recognising the primary role of state and local governments in investment and pricing, the Commonwealth Government must work to facilitate the growth of investment in water services over the next five years to meet housing targets and enable climate resilience.

4. Diversify supply and improve environmental outcomes:

- Create a comprehensive National Water Reuse Action Plan. Support and promote climate-independent sources including purified recycled water and desalination, to complement traditional drinking water supplies and address contaminants like PFAS.
- Directly support investment in water supply security and wastewater services, for better environmental outcomes for regional and rural areas.

5. Close the Gap on water for First Nations Communities:

- Use targeted funding through the National Water Grid to Close the Gap (Target 9b), to ensure equitable access to safe, reliable water for remote communities. This requires an estimated long term investment of over \$3 billion, at least \$300 million is required over the next 5 years.

6. Future-proof critical supply chains and a skilled workforce:

- Strengthen domestic production and supply chain resilience for essential water treatment chemicals.
- Address the urgent need for skilled workers in the water sector to support reliable water services.

7. Circular not linear, invest in science and technology:

- Facilitate water's role in the circular economy for healthy communities and a clean, regenerated environment, through better regulation and investment in research and innovation. The 24/7 operations of the water sector can remove and destroy contaminants; capture and transform water and nutrients for beneficial reuse.

8. Enhance regulation and risk management:

- Implement evidence-based regulatory analysis (including Regulatory Impact Statements) for changes to health, environmental, and safety standards – especially for PFAS, asbestos, and dam safety.
- Agencies like the Water Division within the National Health and Medical Research Council are significantly under-funded; the Commonwealth Government must improve funding to facilitate improved responsiveness to emerging issues.

About WSAA

Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) is the peak body representing the water sector. Our members provide water and wastewater services to over 24 million customers in Australia and New Zealand and many of Australia's largest industrial and commercial enterprises.

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