Meeting 44

Held on: 15 April 2025 – 10:00am – 14:30pm

Held at: 4PSQ – L11:05 and via Teams

Attended

Members

Mr Paul O'Connor (Chair), Ms Julie Garland McLellan (Dep Chair), Mr Shane McGrath, Mr Ian Landon-Jones, Dr Lisa Caffery, Chris Salkovic (CEO).

Management invitees

Ms Margaret Hynes (Manager Capability), Mr Jason Porter (Principal Dams Safety Engineer), Mr Richard Nevill (Manager Governance & Assurance), Ms Alison Collaros (Manager Compliance) and Ms Claire Hendley (Principal Project Officer) – Item 2.9.

External Invitees

Ms Beth Overton (Director Water Policy) and Ms Susan Pucci (Manager Water Policy and Legislation) – Item 2.2

Staff observer

Ms Jackie Mardling (Principal Regulatory Officer)

Secretariat

Mr Peter Skehan (Senior Policy Officer)

Agenda item discussion and actions

Item 1. Meeting Administration

1.1 Acknowledgement of country

Members acknowledged meeting on the land of the Darug people, and paid respect to Elders past, present, and emerging.

1.2 Welcome, apologies and absences

The Chair welcomed attendees.

No apologies were received.

1.3 Declarations

1.3.1 Declarations of interest and disclosures

No new declarations were advised.

1.3.2 Declarations of appointed members' review of papers

Appointed members declared all papers were reviewed.

1.4 Confirmation of agenda and acceptance of items for noting (namely item numbers 4.1 through 4.5)

The agenda was confirmed by appointed members, noting some observations relating to items 4.1 and 4.4.

1.5 Confirmation of previous minutes

The minutes of 19 February 2025 were reviewed and accepted subject to minor edits.

Action: 20251504-01: Secretariat to edit minutes per member recommendations.

1.6 Confirmation of board action items

The board action items were confirmed and accepted.

Action: 20251504-02: CEO to send a thank you letter to Dr Mark Pearce for his 19 February 2025 presentation.

Item 2. Strategic matters

2.1 Strategic plan refresh update.

The meeting paper updated members on the progress of the strategic plan refresh. After incorporating previous feedback from appointed members, an updated draft strategic plan was presented for discussion and agreement on key aspects.

The CEO presented for discussion additional lead and lag elements which were incorporated into each of the 16 strategies within the plan.

Appointed members reviewed the draft strategic plan and emphasised a strong need for a greater directional focus in its wording.

Action: 20251504-03: CEO to update language in draft strategic plan to reflect appointed member recommendations.

Action: 20251504-04: CEO to consider strategic measures (including directional elements) for inclusion on a strategic plan dashboard based on appointed member feedback.

Action: 20251504-05: Strategic framework to be further developed and published ahead of levy implementation and with Ministerial endorsement.

2.2 Review of the Dams Safety Act – update

Ms Beth Overton and Ms Susan Pucci from the DCCEEW Water Policy team presented a paper for discussion to update members on the progress of the *Dams Safety Act 2015* legislative review. The Water Policy team also sought feedback from members on the proposed issues paper and any points of concern for further consideration prior to public consultation in June 2025.

Appointed members endorsed the documents and recommended some minor changes/ clarifications to the issues paper.

Action: 20251504-06: CEO to share catalogue of issues with members.

Action: 20251504-07: Policy team to implement member recommended changes to issues paper.

Action: 20251504-08: Mr Shane McGrath to provide feedback on interpretation of question in issues paper.

Action: 20251504-09: Policy team to confirm process of publishing submissions within report.

2.3 Changes to strategic environment.

The CEO initiated a discussion around DSNSW's strategic environment outlining key issues management has identified for consideration. Key issues included:

- Departmental (DCCEEW) budget pressures, noting key challenges associated with Treasury funding ceilings.
- Significant change across the department highlighting the 'Towards One' change program and its implications.
- Interim reporting changes for the DSNSW CEO.

Action: 20251504-10: CEO to set up Teams meeting for Chair to meet Madeleine Mispel, A/Executive Director Regional Water Strategies .

2.4 Dams Safety levy implementation update.

The meeting paper provided an update on the progress of the Government's implementation of a dam safety levy and the governance framework surrounding it. Key elements discussed included:

- Communications – dam owners received a letter to confirm dam details on 28 March.
- Regulation amendment to enact the levy – projected to be in place by June 2025.
- Budget forecast with respect to establishing a system to collect the levy and internal data costings.
- Key risks associated with establishing a finance system to invoice dam owners.

2.5 Dams above the safety threshold

Two dams with risks above the safety threshold were presented. Interim risk reduction measures for Manly and Thornleigh dams were discussed. Both dams are owned by Sydney Water Corporation.

Appointed members discussed the recent leadership change at Sydney Water and its relationship to DSNSW as well as a commitment to refresh our engagement to focus on a dam safety culture.

Appointed members noted the status reports on the two dams and requested minor editorial changes be made.

Action: 20251504-11: Management team to action additional information required for reports on Manly and Thornleigh dams.

Action: 20251504-12: CEO to draft letter to Sydney Water Corporation as per member recommendations.

2.6 Declaration and revoking of declaration

Appointed members approve the decision, noting recently declared/de-declared dams.

Action: 20251504-13: Management team to provide section 5 Order to Chair out of session.

2.7 WHS focus topic – ergonomics

Ms Alison Collaros presented a paper on workplace ergonomics highlighting key risks, controls and reasonable adjustments. The paper was noted by appointed members.

Item 3. Governance matters

3.1 FY25/26 budget – assumptions and projections

CEO updated members on the work the finance team has done regarding the financial year 2025/26 budget.

Action: 20251504-14: CEO and Secretariat to set up an out-of-session budget meeting between members and finance team.

3.2 Board effectiveness review

Chair outlined the need for further work on the Board effectiveness review paper followed by distribution to members.

Action: 20251504-15: Board effectiveness review paper to be finalised based on results of Deputy chair review and distributed via CEO for next meeting.

Item 4. Operational matters

4.1 Organisational health update (including WH&S)

CEO informed appointed members about key insights into the current state of the agency. Insights included:

- Key WHS indicators, including staff injuries and staff WHS training.
- Current staffing opportunities.
- Agency financial performance for the year 2024/25.

Appointed members noted the paper.

4.2 Operations update

The meeting paper provided information on the operational affairs of DSNSW. Key topics included:

- Current staffing opportunities and challenges.
- Stakeholder engagement activity, such as:
  - Staff participation at the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia
  - CEO presentation at the NSW Australian Water Association Heads of Water forum
  - CEO and Staff presentations to a visiting delegation from India.
  - DSNSW webinar on Risk report insights for declared dam owners.
- Budget estimates inquiry.
- Fines issued for illegal dams by the Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR).
- Quarterly update with Deputy Secretary.

Appointed members noted the information contained in the paper under Item 1.4.

4.3 Tropical cyclone Alfred

Paper presented an overview of DSNSW actions in relation to weather events caused by Tropical Cyclone Alfred. Appointed members noted the paper and thanked the Compliance team for the update and for the timely information as events occurred.

4.4 Risk reports

The updated management approach and submission rates of risk reports were presented.

Appointed members noted the paper.

4.5 Quarterly KPI update

The quarterly KPIs and operational statistics were presented.

Appointed members noted the paper.

Action: 20251504-16: Management team to provide further clarification on KPIs to members.

Item 5. General business

5.1 Other business

The Chair thanked members for their contributions to the letter to IPART with respect to the 2025 Greater Sydney Water NSW price review process.

Members further discussed the importance of continuing engagement with WaterNSW.

5.2 Topics and issues of interest for future agendas

Future agenda items include:

- Board effectiveness review for discussion at the next meeting.
- The impact of Artificial Intelligence (A.I) on dam safety management.
- Request access to and review of Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) report on dam safety risk management.

Action: 20251504-17: CEO to request access and organise review of WSAA report.

Action: 20251504-18: Management team to investigate staff training for Microsoft Co-pilot.

5.3 Communication priorities and protocols

Key priorities and protocols include:

- Engagement with Minister's Office.
- Quarterly update with Deputy Secretary Water.
- Progress report from Paradise dam.

- Meeting with dam safety representatives in Queensland Government regarding changes to their regulatory framework.
- DSNSW engagement with Joint Organisation members from local government on 7 May, 2025.

5.4 Forward plan of board meetings

Next meeting to be held in Parramatta.

5.5 Meeting evaluation

Julie Garland McLellan provided an evaluation of the meeting.

Item 6. Appointed member – in camera

Nil

Item 7. Next meeting

7.1 Next meeting 10 June 2025 in Parramatta.

Item 8. Meeting close

The meeting closed at 2:30pm.