

**Response to Department of Water and Environmental Regulation's Consultation Draft
Fitzroy-Derby Water Resources Management Plan (Draft Report no. 80, April 2026).**

The Western Australian Water Users' Coalition Inc. (WAWUC) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the *Consultation Draft for the Fitzroy-Derby Water Resources Management Plan* (Water Resources Allocation and Planning Report series, Draft Report no. 80, April 2026).

Background:

The Western Australian Water Users' Coalition (WAWUC) was established in 1998 to represent the interests of water license-holders and water users in Western Australia. The WAWUC has a membership that spans a wide cross-section of primary production businesses and industry peak bodies in WA, including aquaculture, agriculture (broad acre and pastoral), amenity and production horticulture, and plantation forestry¹. The WAWUC currently represents over 2000 water-dependent businesses geographically distributed across Western Australia from the Kimberley through to east of Esperance.

All WAWUC members rely on long-term security of quality water sources to sustain their production and business goals. WAWUC member businesses and those of our peak bodies members make a significant contribution to local and regional economies and are an important element of the socio-economic fabric of rural and remote Western Australia.

The water source types used by members depend on the geographical location, but include the entire spectrum including groundwater, overland interception, interception of river and stream flows, and springs. Access to these water sources is regulated under the *Western Australian Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914*², the *Rights in Water and Irrigation Regulations 2000*³ and Water Allocation Plans where established.

Since establishment in 1998, the WAWUC has participated in both National and Western Australian consultations on proposals to reform water legislation, regulations, policy and management frameworks. Most recently, the WAWUC participated in the 2024 consultations for the proposed National Water Agreement⁴.

The WAWUC strongly believes that it is the Economic Use of Water that generates the wealth that ultimately funds cultural-social and environmental programs and activities. Consequently, the WAWUC is deeply concerned that excessive diversion of water from existing economic activities to

¹ WAWUC's nine peak industry body members are Forest Industries Federation of WA, Marron Growers Association of WA, Pastoralists & Graziers Association of WA, Sports Turf Association of WA, Turf Growers Association of WA, WA Potatoes, vegetablesWA, WA Farmers and Wines WA.

² RIWI Act 2014 - https://legislation.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/main_mrtitle_844_homepage.html

³ RIWI Regs 2000 - https://www.legislation.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/law_a700_subsidary.html

⁴ <https://consult.dcceew.gov.au/seeking-views-on-a-future-national-water-agreement/new-survey-bc882de1/view/39> & <https://consult.dcceew.gov.au/help-shape-a-new-national-water-agreement/new-survey/view/43>

non-economic activities will ultimately be counterproductive to the pursuit of environmental and cultural-social goals.

WAWUC's Guiding Principles:

The guiding principles of the WAWUC are: Private Property Rights; Rule of Law; Self-interest; Self-reliance; Subsidiarity; Free Markets; Competition; Lean; Small Government; and Reduced Regulation⁵.

In addition to these ten guiding principles, the WAWUC strongly believes in the fundamental and essential importance of pursuing and employing:

- *Best Practice Governance* - particularly the importance of Independence, Conflict of Interest and rigorous Due Diligence in general;
- *Best Practice Consultation Processes by Governments and their Departments and Agencies* – for example the best practice consultation standards as per outlined in the Australian Government's Guideline⁶.
- *Modern Business Management Frameworks* - particularly Business Continuity, Continual Improvement, Change Management and Lean.
- *Science-based Adaptive Management systems* – where rigorous methodologies for quantitative data collection, analysis and interpretation are used to understand and manage a water resource as well as overtime improve the management of the water resource through the ongoing collection, analysis and interpretation of data as the resource is used by all interested parties (cultural-social, economic and environmental). All inputs and methodologies must be open to critique and challenge.

WAWUC members impacted by the Fitzroy-Derby Water Resources Management Plan:

Based on feedback from our members, Pastoralists and Graziers of WA is currently the only one of our nine peak industry body members that have members (pastoralists) within the Plan area.

Pastoralism is the dominant land use and economic activity in the Plan area⁷. As of 2021, PGA members owned over 50% of all pastoral leases and over 50% of leases with frontage to either the Fitzroy or Margaret Rivers⁸. It is understood that in 2026, these percentages are similar. Consequently, the PGA and its members are a very significant stakeholder in the Fitzroy-Derby Plan area delivering much needed economic activity and employment as well as delivering important environmental management and support for indigenous communities.

WAWUC understands that the PGA will be making its own submission on the Fitzroy-Derby Plan. Note that, while PGA is one of WAWUC peak industry body members, this WAWUC Submission is separate from any PGA submission and is not intended to be a substitute for a PGA Submission.

This WAWUC Submission is based on WAWUC's views on the Plan informed by conversations with a range of WA government personnel and industry representatives, including PGA. WAWUC acknowledges that Kimberley Pilbara Cattlemen's Association (KPCA) also represents pastoralists within the Plan area. KPCA are currently not a member of the WAWUC.

⁵ The application of these guiding principles to water are briefly outlined in Appendix 1.

⁶ Best Practice Consultation, Australian Government, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Office of Impact Analysis (July 2023); <https://oia.pmc.gov.au/resources/guidance-oia-procedures/best-practice-consultation>

⁷ Over 95% of catchment, CSIRO Water Resource Assessment for the Fitzroy Catchment, June 2018.

⁸ PGA Submission on Discussion Paper: Managing Water in the Fitzroy River Catchment (2021).

WAWUC Participation in Consultations on the Fitzroy-Derby Water Resource Management Plan:

The current consultation is the first time that WAWUC itself has participated in the overall consultation process that has resulted in the Draft Fitzroy-Derby Water Resources Management Plan.

However, one of our peak body members, PGA, has been actively involved in the development process, including attendance at the August 2019 Fitzroy Crossing Stakeholder Forum (which produced the Fitzroy Communique), and submissions on the Draft Derby Groundwater Allocation Plan (2020) and the Managing Water in the Fitzroy River Catchment – Policy Discussion Paper (2020)⁹.

On 9 June 2026, at the invitation of PGA, WAWUC attended PGA's meeting with the WA Minister for Water to discuss the Draft Plan and on 19 June 2026, the WAWUC and PGA attended a special briefing for WAWUC and its members on the Draft Plan by senior DWER staff.

Quality of Consultation Process:

WAWUC's view is that overall the planning and consultation process leading the Draft Fitzroy-Derby Plan has approached best practice, including:

- multiple and sequential opportunities for stakeholders to participate, including forums, special briefings, discussion papers and draft plans; and
- a high level of technical foundation for Draft Derby Groundwater Allocation Plan (2020) and especially the Discussion Paper: Managing Water in the Fitzroy River Catchment (2020)

However, as outlined above, pursuit of Best Practice Consultation Processes by Governments and their Departments and Agencies is very important to the WAWUC. From a Rule of Law perspective, the WAWUC believes that in any consultation undertaken by governments, all stakeholders should be treated equally and the government entity undertaking the consultation must maintain independence during the consultation process from the interests of any stakeholders. That is no stakeholder should receive preferential treatment or be engaged in preferential co-design rights.

In this regard, WAWUC is concerned that indigenous stakeholders have been provided with preferential engagement which has resulted in significant co-design opportunities. The WAWUC fully recognizes that indigenous people and their various representative groups have significant rights under various laws (WA and National) within the Plan area and are therefore significant stakeholders and absolutely needed to be engaged.

WAWUC is concerned that other significant stakeholders (government and non-government), especially stakeholders with economic responsibilities or interests within the Fitzroy-Derby Plan area have not been equally or adequately engaged and as a result economic goals have not been adequately incorporated into the Draft Plan compared to cultural-social and environmental goals.

The WAWUC notes that the 2020 Discussion Paper was developed within an 'umbrella project' that brought together four Ministers and their Departments; those being Minister for Water, Minister for Environment, Minister for Regional Development and Agriculture, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Lands. The WAWUC regards this 'whole of government' approach to developing a region like Kimberley or a sub-region like the Fitzroy-Derby Plan area as essential, given the complexity of critical factors for success and their interconnections.

⁹ *Submission from Pastoralists & Graziers of WA on Draft Derby Groundwater Allocation Plan (May 2021); Pastoralists & Graziers of WA Submission on Discussion Paper: Managing Water in the Fitzroy River Catchment (Aug 2021)*

An important element of this ‘umbrella project’ was the development of a Socio-Economic Vision for the Fitzroy Catchment and its inhabitants. Unfortunately, this Socio-Economic Vision has not been developed. The WAWUC strongly believes that the Draft Fitzroy-Derby Water Resources Management Plan would have a far better balance between cultural-social, environmental and economic goals, if the WA government had developed the Socio-Economic Vision first (with full stakeholder engagement), and then the Water Plan. In the absence of the Socio-Economic Vision, the Water Plan has been strongly dominated by cultural-social and environmental interests and goals, resulting in economic goals and interests being secondary considerations. And yet delivering on cultural-social and environmental outcomes ultimately depend on economic activities.

Furthermore, given that agriculture is currently the major economic activity within the Plan area, the WAWUC is also concerned that Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) has not been adequately engaged within government in the development of the Draft Plan, especially being asked what DPIRD’s perspective is on what agribusiness potential exists within the Plan area given the intersection of arable land and access to water sources. Again, this is why WAWUC believes that the Socio-Economic Vision should have been created first.

WAWUC strongly supports that submissions will be publicly available on the DWER website. One of the obvious deficiencies in the previous consultation processes for the Draft Derby Groundwater Plan (2020) and the Discussion Paper: Managing water in the Fitzroy River Catchment (2020) was that submissions were not publicly available on the DWER website.

Water Allocations in Draft Plan:

WAWUC supports the Draft Fitzroy-Derby Plan combining the water resources in the Derby Groundwater area and the Fitzroy River Catchment due to the connectivity of water sources across the common boundary.

The WAWUC is very disappointed with the significant differences between the proposed surface and groundwater allocations in the 2020 Discussion Paper and the current Draft Fitzroy-Derby Plan.

Specifically, the decision to allocate 0 GL/year of new surface water (in contrast to 300 GL/year in Discussion Paper, 2020) and to reduce the groundwater allocation to only 75.7 GL/year (in contrast to 108.5 GL/year from the Fitzroy catchment alone in the Discussion Paper, 2020).

Surface Water:

The WAWUC regards the surface water decision as essentially a political decision rather than a technically based decision. WAWUC notes that the 2020 Discussion paper offered two options for surface water allocation – 0 GL/year and 300 GL/year. These two options offered for public comment did not negate the opportunity for the WA government to subsequently propose an intermediate allocation based on submissions and taking into account political pressures. However, it appears as though the submissions (43,934) were used as ‘votes’ rather than for the quality of arguments put forward.

WAWUC questions the technical weight that should be given to the 41,972 template public campaign responses (where only about 10% were from the Kimberley region¹⁰), compared to single unique submissions representing interests within Fitzroy catchment (for example, the 2021 PGA submission).

¹⁰ Summary of Submissions – Managing Water in the Fitzroy River Catchment Discussion Paper for Stakeholder Consultation (2020), Oct 2023, p10.

The WAWUC regards the 300GL/year option offered in 2020 as an extremely conservative proposal, given that it:

1. represented only 18% of the CSIRO recommendation of up to 1700GL/year;
2. represented only 4.5% of the long-term average flow of 6,600 GL/year; and
3. would be released through a stage approach based on adaptive management principles.

Furthermore, the proposed adaptive management framework and rules for licensed water harvesting were very sophisticated and based on extensive historical and contemporary flow data, including a minimum flow requirement to environmentally flush the river before any water harvesting would be permitted at all.

The 300GL surface water option, within a sophisticated adaptive management regime, would have permitted innovation and entrepreneurship opportunities for pastoralists (and other agribusinesses) with river and stream frontage to explore the feasibility of sustainable water-based agribusiness activities while protecting cultural-social and environmental values. Also noting that any agribusiness development proposal would have to meet a plethora of other regulatory hurdles before implementation could commence. These include land tenure, native vegetation clearing, Aboriginal Heritage, EPBC, Future Acts under the Native Title Act and ILUA negotiations. Of course, in addition to meeting all regulatory requirements, a development proponent must also secure sufficient funding to not only implement the proposal if approved, but also cover the substantial costs associated with regulatory processes.

By offering 0 GL/year new surface water, the opportunity to innovate and learn how to use surface water sustainably to create economic opportunities for all in the Fitzroy catchment has been effectively denied. Furthermore, by offering 0 GL/year new surface water, the Plan is essentially granting 100% (minus 6.1 GL existing licenses – which represents less than 0.1% of the long-term annual flow of the Fitzroy River) allocation of surface water to indigenous and environmental interests (noting that WAWUC is aware that not all indigenous people in the Fitzroy-Derby Plan area are against surface water use for economic activities). This is hardly a balanced allocation across cultural-social, economic and environmental interests and opportunities.

The WAWUC, notes in Table 4 (p14) of the Draft Plan, that the right-hand column (Water availability for further licensing) lists “Restricted” for all major rivers within the Fitzroy catchment and hopes that this represents an Amber Light and not a Red Light.

By Amber Light, the WAWUC hopes that in future, if a proponent develops and presents to the WA Government a rigorously development proposal based on an allocation of surface water and that will create new economic opportunities, particularly for local indigenous peoples, and will pass all the other regulatory hurdles, that the WA Minister for Water and the WA Government will seriously consider the proposal and an allocation of surface water.

WAWUC is aware of the Northern Territory’s Surface Water Take – Wet Season Flow Policy¹¹ which is a technically based framework for calculating volumes of surface water that NT license holders can harvest without impacting on cultural-social and environmental values. The permissible take volume is very conservatively calculated as “5% of the 25th percentile of total flows for the three highest flow months of the year based on the previous 50 years flow or modelled rainfall data of the river basin”. Given that the cultural-social and environmental parameters in Kimberley and Northern Territory have

¹¹<https://nt.gov.au/environment/water/water-in-the-nt/surface-water/taking-surface-water>, developed by the Northern Territory Labor Government (2016–2020).

a great deal in common, WAWUC highly recommends that DWER seriously consider the NT framework. If DWER has not done this already as part of developing the Fitzroy-Derby Plan, the question is why not? From a pastoralism perspective, several pastoralists own and operate pastoral leases on both sides of the WA-NT border and would no doubt value some cross-border regulatory harmonization.

WAWUC believes that capture of overland flow of water (not associated with any waterway) during the wet season should be permitted and encouraged to facilitate agribusiness developments away from the river system and the floodplain. This could lead to relatively small-scale irrigation activities across the Plan area, especially where groundwater may not be present or allocatable.

Groundwater:

The WAWUC regards the groundwater allocation decision in the Draft Plan to be more solidly technically based with some political amendments. Though the 75.7GL/year is less than what was proposed in the 2020 Fitzroy Catchment Discussion Paper and the 2020 Draft Derby Groundwater Plan combined, at least it is not 0GL/year. WAWUC appreciates that while some stakeholders would have been arguing for zero or near zero groundwater allocation, the Minister for Water and the Draft Plan have resisted such pressure and offered a reasonable quantity of groundwater that can be used to develop new economic activities within the Plan area.

WAWUC notes in Table 5 (p15) of the Draft Plan, the right-hand column (Water availability for further licensing) indicates that while several aquifers are restricted or fully allocated, other aquifers are available or will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The WAWUC welcomes this opportunity for further development of groundwater sources for economic development.

WAWUC also notes in Table 5 (p15) of the Draft Plan it is not clear how the ratio of available groundwater for General Licensing (column 4) and Fitzroy-Derby Aboriginal Water Holding (column 5) for each aquifer has been calculated. Has DWER developed a clear and publicly available Policy Framework for calculating allocations to Aboriginal Water Holdings/Reserves in WA? The WAWUC is aware of the Northern Territory's Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserves Policy and Framework¹². If DWER has not developed a similar policy and framework, then WAWUC highly recommends that DWER develops something similar to the NT policy and framework.

It is clear from all the technical information available that hydrogeological understanding of the groundwater resources in the Fitzroy-Derby Plan area is limited. Knowledge of depth, volumes and flow rates is obviously best close to the limited number of bores across the Plan area. To fully understand the groundwater resources in the Plan area, more bores will need to be drilled, and test pumped to establish volumes, flow rates and water quality.

It is WAWUC's understanding that the Minister for Water is keen to support the development of groundwater for economic activities within the Plan area. One way the Minister, DWER and the WA Government can achieve this support is by facilitating a bore drilling and test pump program. This could be facilitated by some degree of public funding or could be achieved through simplifying the regulatory processes within the Plan area to encourage privately funded drilling and testing programs under DWER oversight and data sharing.

¹²<https://nt.gov.au/environment/water/management-security/water-plan/aboriginal-water-reserves>, developed the Northern Territory Labor Government (2016–2020).

Surface versus Groundwater - a technical risk perspective:

WAWUC understands the politics behind the Plan's proposed allocations for surface water (0 GL) and groundwater (75.6GL).

However, from a technical risk perspective, WAWUC is somewhat surprised that the water source selected as the sole basis for economic development – groundwater – is the water source associated with greatest unknowns and potential risks. Indeed, some of these risks have been used to justify the reduction in groundwater allocation from the 2020 proposal to the current Plan's groundwater allocation. WAWUC believes the arguments to reduce groundwater use will only increase in future years as environmentalists argue for greater protection for groundwater ecosystems¹³. Stygofauna have already stopped or significantly altered a few mining proposals in Western Australia. WAWUC fully expects similar arguments to be made in future against groundwater extraction for agribusiness uses thereby adding yet another risk for proponents.

In stark contrast, the surface water within the Fitzroy catchment is incredibly well understood based on many years of flow data from multiple gauging stations located across the Fitzroy catchment's major tributaries. This high level of technical understanding of the surface water over many years permits the development of very sophisticated adaptive management frameworks and rules to permit harvesting while having imperceptible impacts on cultural-social and environmental interests – as was the case for the 2020 proposed 300GL/year surface water allocation.

WAWUC believes that the fundamental problem here is that some stakeholders have adopted positions that can only be referred to as Absolutist, Exclusionist and Monopolist with respect to surface water and quite possibly groundwater as well. While industry was prepared to accept a maximum allocation of 300GL/year (with all the associated adaptive management rules), which represented only 4.5% of the long-term average annual flow of 6.6 cubic kilometers¹⁴ and left 95.5% of the surface flow to support all other stakeholder interests (cultural-social and environmental), the vast majority of the 43,934 submissions on the 2020 Discussion Paper adopted a position that demanded 100% allocation of surface water to their interests and 0% to economic development activities. The fact that the vast majority of submissions were from people outside of the Plan area should have been factored into the calculus of what the best water allocation mix was for people living and working in the Plan area.

Water Advisory Committee:

WAWUC supports the establishment of a Water Advisory Committee with several important caveats.

Subsidiarity is a very important principle for the WAWUC (see Appendix 1). The involvement of local people in the management of water is paramount as local people have the most relevant local knowledge and the most 'skin in the game' irrespective of whether their water interest is cultural-social, environmental, or economic, or any combination of these. Consequently, in principle WAWUC strongly supports the establishment of a Water Advisory Committee.

However, it is essential that the composition, governance and mission are designed to deliver a committee that will add real value to existing statutory regulatory roles and processes undertaken by

¹³ Curtin University hosts Paris workshop with international experts to conserve groundwater ecosystems - <https://tinyurl.com/4xap6p6e>

¹⁴ using DWER analog of 1GL = to volume of Perth Stadium – that is 6,600 Perth Stadiums!

DWER and other relevant WA Government regulators and not become an impediment to continual improvement in the management and use of water in the Plan area.

Composition:

WAWUC strongly recommends that all ordinary members appointed to the Committee should represent a specific stakeholder group and carry responsibility to represent that stakeholder group's interests. This will ensure that the widest possible views across the Plan area are considered in Committee deliberations. Individuals without a representative role should not be appointed as ordinary Committee members.

The Chair should be independent of any stakeholder group. Their sole role is to ensure best practice in governance and adherence to the Committee's Mission.

There should be a balance of stakeholder interests. It is essential that economic interests are represented in the Committee, otherwise economic development that is critical to the socio-economic welfare of all people in the Plan area will continue to suffer and not be progressed.

With respect to Agribusiness representation on the Committee, WAWUC highly recommends that both PGA and KPCA are invited to nominate representatives, as both industry peak bodies have significant membership within the Plan area.

Governance:

The Terms of Reference must not only permit but require ordinary Committee members to share information with the group they represent so that can properly fulfil a representative role. The Chair should seek evidence that ordinary Committee members are actively seeking their stakeholder group's views and not simply representing their own individual views.

Mission:

WAWUC strongly believes that the Advisory Committee's role should be only Advisory and in no way duplicate or replace any statutory role of DWER or any other regulator. The Committee cannot have any right of veto over regulatory decisions by DWER or any other WA government regulator. Such powers would transfer sovereign decision powers from a democratically elected and electorally accountable government to an unelected and democratically unaccountable entity.

Moving Forward – WAWUC Recommendations:

While the WAWUC is disappointed by the water allocations in the Draft Plan, especially no new surface water licences, we are pleased that a groundwater allocation is being offered and that further investigations of groundwater resources could lead to further allocations.

With respect to groundwater, WAWUC highly recommends that the Minister for Water and DWER investigate ways to facilitate further groundwater investigations including a bore drilling and test pumping program. This could be facilitated through public funding, partial or complete, or by simplifying the regulatory processes to encourage private drilling and test pumping under DWER oversight and data sharing.

With respect to surface water, WAWUC strongly encourages the Minister for Water and DWER to reconsider a blanket ban on new surface water licences and be open to considering rigorously developed proposals seeking a surface water allocation that will create new economic opportunities, particularly for local indigenous peoples, and that is likely to pass all the other regulatory requirements.

Also, with respect to surface water, WAWUC strongly encourage DWER to investigate how Northern Territory's *Surface Water Take – Wet Season Flow Policy* and *Aboriginal Water Reserves Framework* could add value to water management in the Fitzroy-Derby Plan area. WAWUC notes that both were developed by the Northern Territory Labor Government (2016–2020).

With respect to the complexity and burden of numerous regulatory processes that any proponent needs to navigate in the Fitzroy-Derby Plan Area, WAWUC strongly recommends that the Minister for Water and the WA Government seriously consider establishing a Streamline WA project. Lean is one of WAWUC's ten guiding principles and Streamline WA is an application of Lean principles and practice to regulatory processes. A Streamline WA project would bring all major stakeholders and regulatory bodies together to map all the regulatory processes and work to simplify them. A simplified regulatory landscape for proponents in the Plan area would benefit proponents and regulators inside the Plan area and more generally across the region and potentially across the entire state. Another alternative is to run a 90-Day Regulatory Mapping and Reform Project like Department of Treasury has previously run for several industries including Horticulture¹⁵

The WAWUC looks forward to continuing to work with the Minister for Water and DWER in the further development of Fitzroy-Derby Water Resources Management Plan and its future implementation.

Please direct any correspondence to:

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¹⁵ <https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2020-02/streamline-wa-horticulture-90-day-project-findings-from-business-consultations.pdf>

Appendix: WA Water Users Coalition Guiding Principles

The guiding principles of the WAWUC are: Private Property Rights; Rule of Law; Self-interest; Self-reliance; Subsidiarity; Free Markets; Competition; Lean; Small Government; and Reduced Regulation.

Private Property Rights – The WAWUC regards well defined and protected private property rights as a fundamental basis for both the social and economic security of individuals and the community in which they live and work. The WAWUC is very concerned that private property rights, including those associated with water, have steadily been eroded by increasing regulatory interventions.

Rule of Law – The WAWUC strongly believes in the Rule of Law. That is, all Australian citizens are treated equally under the law, irrespective of their specific ‘identity’ or ‘interest’ characteristics. The WAWUC believes that Rule of Law concept should also be promulgated through all processes in government, which has a duty to all Australian citizens. This promulgation includes internal planning processes and external consultation processes. The WAWUC believes that Rule of Law principles are embodied in the Australian Government’s Best Practice Consultation Guidance Note¹⁶. The Guidance Note outlines how consultations should be Continuous, Broad-based, Accessible, Not burdensome, Transparent, Consistent and Flexible, Subject to Evaluation and Review, and Not Rushed.

The WAWUC strongly believes that co-design and co-planning activities undertaken by government with preferential early access provided to any particular interest group are antithetical to the concept of Rule of Law. If co-design or co-planning is to be undertaken, then it should involve all stakeholder groups, especially those who are likely to be impacted.

With respect to ownership, access and use of water, the WAWUC strongly believes application of the Rule of Law means that all Australian citizens and organizations should have the same rights.

Self-Interest – The WAWUC believes that it is through self-interest¹⁷, combined with well-defined and protected property rights, that resources are most-likely to be managed sustainably – this includes water.

Self-Reliance – The WAWUC believes that encouraging greater self-reliance in management of resources is critical, especially if combined with strong private property rights and subsidiarity, as this will result in greater use of local knowledge in the sustainable management, managing risk and reduce the burden on public funds for events like drought.

Subsidiarity – The WAWUC strongly believes that local people have the greatest knowledge of local issues and knowledge relevant to local management of issues. This includes water management. Governments and regulators will never have sufficient resources, including money, time, resources and competent people, to manage water efficiently, effectively and economically across the vastness of Western Australia or Australia. Consequently, the WAWUC see the only viable solution to improving water management across Australia is to honestly and properly engage local water user communities as essential components of the water management framework. Engagement of local water user communities will leverage off the fact that local water users know more about local water than non-local people.

¹⁶ Best Practice Consultation, Australian Government, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Office of Impact Analysis (July 2023); <https://oia.pmc.gov.au/resources/guidance-oia-procedures/best-practice-consultation>

¹⁷ Adam Smith’s definition of Self-Interest which is a virtue that encourages outward looking to the community.

Free Markets & Competition – The WAWUC believes that free-market mechanisms, including competition, are the most efficient mechanisms for managing resource allocation and driving efficient use of resources and encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation relevant to the resource.

Lean – The WAWUC believes that Lean Manufacturing principles and practice are an extremely powerful means of identifying inefficient use of resources and thereby driving continual improvements that reduce waste and release ‘new resource’.

Small Government & Reduced Regulation – Regulatory Tape is a major cost impost on businesses, government and the community. The WAWUC sees the application of Lean Manufacturing principles and practice to government, its bureaucratic and regulatory, processes to be essential and a high priority. In WA, StreamlineWA¹⁸, has been an attempt to apply Lean Manufacturing to some regulatory processes. One frequent misunderstanding about Lean, is that it will result in a reduced outcome. This is not the case, as proper application of Lean analysis, identifies the end result desired, and then reviews the manufacturing process to achieve that result, looking for more efficient ways to achieve the outcome. Leaner government and regulatory processes will deliver the same outcomes, but require less money, time, resources and fewer competent people. This will deliver benefits to all parties including government, businesses and the community.

¹⁸ StreamlineWA - <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/government-initiatives-and-projects/streamline-wa>