



Department of Water and  
Environmental Regulation



Annual report 2022-23  
Overview/Our priorities



## Department of Water and Environmental Regulation

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Front cover concept: Department staff at work  
Back cover: Hydrographer Nerissa Black installs temporary river monitoring instruments at our destroyed Dimond Gorge site, in the upper Fitzroy catchment. Picture: Nathan Dyer

Thanks to Ash Ramsay, Katharina Starke, Mogli Olawsky, Pete Horgan, Ruwani Gilmour and Mark Bundock for their photo contributions in this report

### Disclaimer

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## Statement of compliance

For the year ended 30 June 2023

**Hon Simone McGurk MLA**

Minister for Water

**Hon Reece Whitby MLA**

Minister for Environment; Climate Action

In accordance with section 63 of the *Financial Management Act 2006*, I hereby submit for your information and presentation to Parliament the annual report for the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation for the financial year ended 30 June 2023.

The annual report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the *Financial Management Act 2006*.



Michelle Andrews

Director General

13 October 2023



Our staff meet with our Aboriginal Water and Environment Advisory Group and the Committee of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Water Interests

## Acknowledgement and reconciliation

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which we live and work throughout Western Australia and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

We recognise the practice of intergenerational care for Country and its relevance to our work as water and environmental managers.

We seek to listen, learn and genuinely engage and build strong partnerships. We aim to provide sustainable opportunities for Aboriginal people within our workforce and through our business.

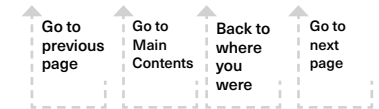
Working with the community, we move forward with a shared commitment to protect and conserve Country for future generations. We recognise Country is a term used by Aboriginal people to describe the lands, waterways and seas to which they are intrinsically linked, and to which their wellbeing, law, place, custom, language, spiritual belief, cultural practice, material sustenance, family and identity belong.



# Better together!







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## From the Director General



Minister for Water Hon Simone McGurk MLA and Minister for Environment; Climate Action Hon Reece Whitby MLA with Director General Michelle Andrews

I am delighted to present the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation's annual report for 2022–23. It details another busy year in pursuit of our vision of a low-carbon Western Australia with a healthy environment and secure water resources for future generations.

The past 12 months have seen extreme weather events around the world, none having a greater impact on Western Australia than the Kimberley Floods.

For 10 days from 29 December 2022, heavy rainfall associated with ex-tropical cyclone Ellie saw up to 500 mm recorded in parts of our state's north-west, causing major flooding and damage. On 4 January 2023 our gauging station at Fitzroy Crossing bridge registered a river level 1.5 m higher than the previous record. The bridge was washed away and that gauging station was one of four that stopped working, affecting the flood forecasting and warning operations of the Bureau of Meteorology and constraining our ability to provide flood risk advice.

Our Kimberley Flood Recovery Team sprung to action to help the emergency response. Floodplain engineers in Perth analysed data to support emergency services decisions and prepare updates for local shires. The North West Region Measurement team worked hard to get into the field in dangerous conditions, taking measurements, assessing damage and repairing our monitoring infrastructure, helped by colleagues from the Hydrologic Technology Centre in Welshpool.



We also tackled waste management issues, undertook urgent sewer repairs, and provided strategic planning for landfills. It was a commendable team effort.

This was another reminder of our changing weather systems, and in this annual report you will read about an acceleration of our work supporting the State Government's Climate Action priorities.

We are developing Sectoral Emissions Reduction Strategies to help achieve a transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, while creating a *Climate Adaptation Strategy* to build our community's ability to adapt to a changing climate and to enhance resilience to extreme weather events. We are supporting this work by producing the most detailed Western Australian climate projections for the rest of this century through the Climate Science Initiative, utilising the most powerful research supercomputer in the Southern Hemisphere, based at the Pawsey centre in Perth.

We are also establishing the Green Energy Approvals Initiative to provide a streamlined pathway to assess renewable energy projects while balancing environmental protection.

To focus on these challenges, and many others in our department's wide scope as the state's primary water and environmental regulator, we are transforming our operations and embracing new technology.

This past year has seen us continue to lead in the delivery of the Streamline WA program and apply its principles to everything we do: reducing duplication and overlap, making timely and transparent decisions, and applying regulation that is proportionate to the risk.

Progress on Environment Online, which went live in August 2022, is expanding our digital service capabilities and transforming how we deliver our regulatory services.

In the waste sphere, you will read about how we are continuing our fight to reduce single-use plastic pollution with the second phase of the Plan for Plastics. At the same time, we are collaborating extensively with the Waste Authority to support Western Australia's transition to a circular economy, preparing for the Australian Government's ban on disposing electronic waste to landfill in 2024, and undertaking a waste

infrastructure review so we can better reprocess glass, plastic, cardboard, tyres, and food and garden organic waste.

Managing water resources to support growth and liveability also remains critical to our service delivery. Our allocation and licensing provides access to water for industry, food production and public water supply. It also ensures our water resources are healthy, sustainable and able to meet use while protecting natural ecosystems.

Our continued excellence in rivers and estuaries health work, and commitment to protecting biodiversity, was rewarded through our role in the exciting discovery of new freshwater crayfish species in Western Australia's south-west.

Work on native vegetation policy and regional planning will continue our goal of nature-positive outcomes for native habitat, supporting conservation and rehabilitation.

It is our firm belief that all this work, and much more, is enhanced if we engage with, listen to, and learn from our state's First Nations peoples.



In October 2022 we launched our second Waterwise Perth Action Plan, *Kep Katitjin – Gabi Kaadadjan*, which means 'water knowledge' in the Whadjuk and Bindjareb dialects of the Country the plan covers. In it we pledge to walk with Noongar people to incorporate traditional environmental knowledge into waterwise action and heal our waterways.

We also published our second Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan which, among many commitments, focuses on increasing the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our department and providing career development pathways and leadership opportunities. I was thrilled to announce during Reconciliation Week that Noongar woman Jillian Collard had been promoted to the role of Director Aboriginal Engagement and Partnerships as part of the Public Sector Commission's Women in Executive Leadership Development Experience Initiative. This includes joining our Corporate Executive and I look forward to working closely with Jillian.

Although we have achieved much this past year, we know we can always improve our operations and service delivery, and reform is front and centre of much that we do.

A performance audit by the Auditor General, into our compliance and enforcement program for environmental conditions surrounding mining approvals, made a number of recommendations and we are addressing these.

In September 2022 we saw the publication of the Public Sector Commission's Agency Capability Review, which identified our strengths and listed areas for improvement for us to be a high-performing agency. As a result we are moving to a portfolio-based operational structure and I welcomed two new Deputy Directors General in Dennis O'Reilly (Strategy and Performance) and Emily Briggs (Climate and Sustainability). Our third Deputy Director General, Chris Shaw, will join the department in November to lead the Approvals portfolio.

I was proud that the Agency Capability Review highlighted our committed and values-based workforce with strong science knowledge and policy skills, and I am confident those attributes will come to the fore as we progressively implement the report's recommendations into the next financial year.



**Michelle Andrews**  
Director General



# Overview

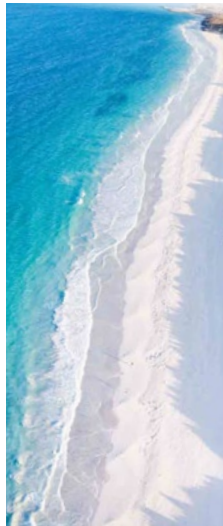
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## Who we are

As Western Australia's primary water and environmental regulator, the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (the department) has a responsibility to be an influential and future-focused organisation.



# Our 2022–23 at a glance



**\$40 million**

allocated to developing climate-resilient communities through the Climate Adaptation Strategy



**\$22.5 million**

allocated to drive delivery of green energy solutions for Western Australia



**300 million**

plastic straws saved from landfill through the Plan for Plastics



**\$8.8 million**

donated to charities and community organisations through Containers for Change



**420,000**

views of our Be Groundwater Wise videos with garden expert Sabrina Hahn



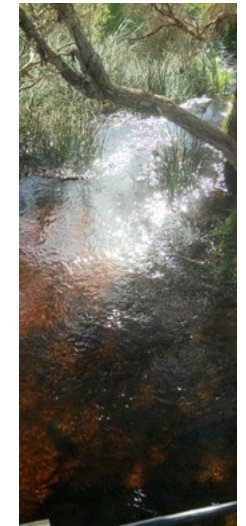
**1.3 million**

users reached by the Be a GREAT Sort social media campaign



**200,000**

households receiving three-bin FOGO services



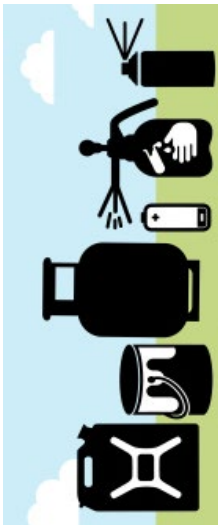
**12,767**

water licences managed across 775 groundwater and 413 surface water resources



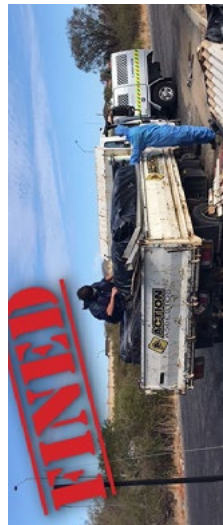
**12,000 million+**

litres of water saved by our two Waterwise Perth action plans, enough to fill Optus Stadium 12 times



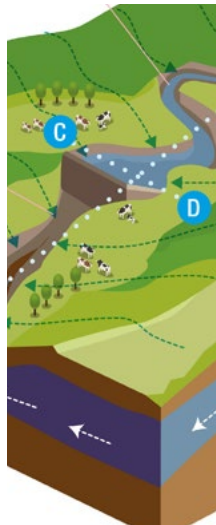
**485 tonnes**

of household hazardous waste materials collected for safe recovery or disposal



**25**

illegal dumpers prosecuted



**\$2.986 million**

spent supporting 12 active groundwater investigation projects



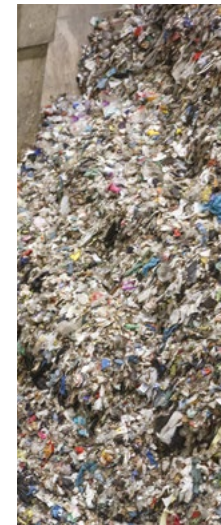
**8,657**

requests for water information on our Water Information Reporting portal

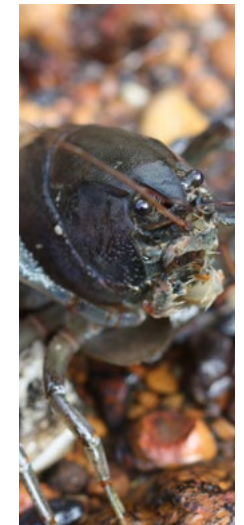


**3,922**

reports to Pollution Watch



**1.3 million**  
tonnes of controlled waste tracked



**3**

new freshwater crayfish species identified in south-west Western Australia



## Our vision

Our vision is for a low-carbon Western Australia with a healthy environment and secure water resources for future generations.

## Our mission



### Waste

We act to reduce the harmful impact of waste and create a low-waste circular economy.



### Climate

We act to reduce emissions, mitigate climate change impacts and build greater environmental and community resilience.



### Water

We act to ensure our water resources meet the needs of the community, ecosystems and economic development.



### Environment

We act to make sure that environmental values are protected, and that development is sustainable.

## Our values



### We serve to make a difference

- We are professionals who deliver sustainable outcomes for current and future generations
- We align our work with the department's priorities and government's direction
- We continue to improve our engagement with Aboriginal people for everyone's prosperity
- We recognise the practice of intergenerational care for Country by Traditional Custodians
- We plan with the future in mind, regularly reviewing our efforts to focus on the right priorities at the right time



### We build trust

- We engage early, listen to understand, and respond consistently
- We ensure our work is transparent, evidence-based, and accountable
- We are respectful, honest and kind, and demonstrate empathy
- We operate with the highest levels of integrity
- We hold ourselves and each other to account



### We care

- We work as a team, valuing the expertise of each other
- We take time to build capability and contribute to the development of our people
- We contribute to an inclusive, safe and healthy workplace
- We are upstanders and support one another to respectfully challenge inappropriate behaviour



### Open minds

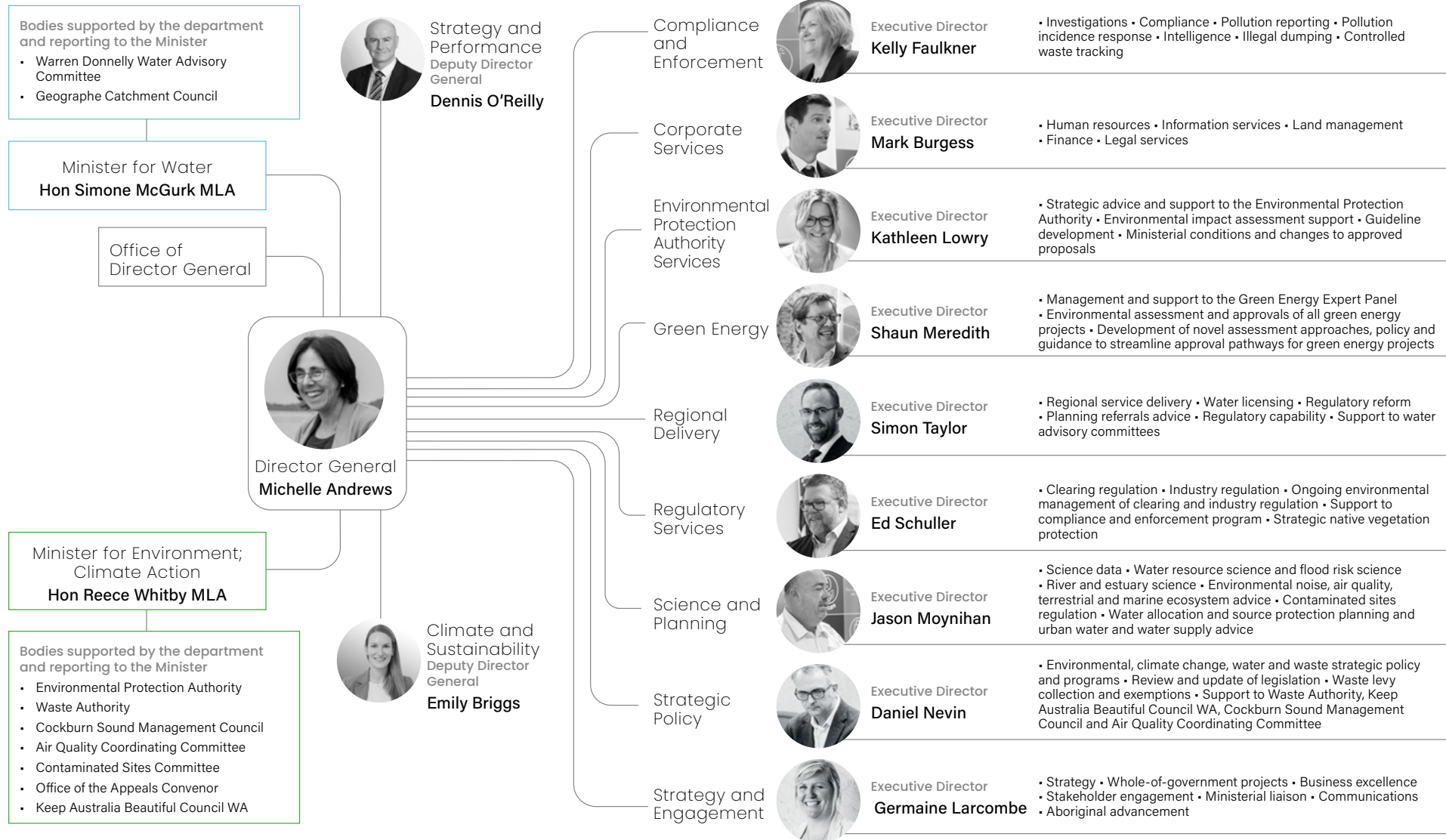
- We embrace new ideas and innovation
- We are mindful of both the big picture and local place-based information in our work
- We are flexible and seek better ways to do our work, and we learn from our mistakes
- We are adaptable and resilient in the face of change



### Better together

- We work inclusively and collaboratively and have a 'one Government' mindset
- We value our differences and use them to expand our thinking
- We actively share knowledge and information
- We engage in a practical and courteous way with those affected by our work
- We lead at all levels and empower our people to make decisions

# Our 2022–23 structure















# Our people

Our department grew to 1,058 employees in 2022–23. Our *Workforce and Diversity Plan* affirms that by bringing together people, from different backgrounds and with different points of view, we create the most value and better reflect the community that we serve.

## Snapshot of our diversity

	 Women in Senior Executive Services	 Youth	 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	 Culturally and linguistically diverse people	 People with disability
Aspirational targets	50.0%	5.8%	3.7%	15.5%	5.0%
Number of staff 30 June 2023	13	29	10	164	43
Change from last year	 up from 10	 up from 24	 down from 12	 up from 119	 up from 31
% representation	46.4%	2.7%	0.95%	15.5%	4.1%
Gap to meet target	1	32	29	Met target	10

# Performance summary

## Actual results versus budget targets

The department evaluates, measures and reports on the effectiveness of its services in achieving its desired agency-level outcomes through key performance indicators.

Key performance indicators comprise both effectiveness and efficiency indicators.














Effectiveness indicators show the extent to which the department achieved its department-level outcomes, while efficiency indicators show the cost of services delivered by the department, as summarised in the following tables.

You will find more detail in our Disclosures section, which starts on page 107.

### Financial targets

	2021–22 Actual (\$'000)	2022–23 Budget (\$'000)	2022–23 Actual (\$'000)	2022–23 Variance (\$'000)
<b>Total cost of services</b> (i.e. endorsed expense limit)	182,373	244,639	<b>211,497</b>	33,142
<b>Net cost services</b> (details in the income statement)	45,369	88,339	<b>52,256</b>	36,083
<b>Total equity</b> (details in the statement of financial position)	566,945	561,216	<b>655,670</b>	-94,454
<b>Agreed salary expense level</b>	92,872	113,309	<b>109,702</b>	3,607
<b>Working cash limit</b>	8,376	11,107	<b>9,656</b>	1,451

## Summary of key effectiveness indicators

Outcome	Key effectiveness indicator	2021–22	2022–23		
		Actual %	Target %	Actual %	Variance %
1. Western Australia's growth and development is supported by the sustainable management of water resources for the long-term benefit of the state	Proportion of stakeholders who perceive the department to be effectively managing the state's water as a resource for sustainable, productive use	59	60	58	-2 
	Proportion of priority growth areas that have a water supply planning strategy	10	57	57	0 
2. Emissions, discharges and clearing of native vegetation are effectively regulated to avoid unacceptable risks to public health and the environment	Percentage of regulatory compliance activities completed as planned	87	100	100	0 
	Percentage of potential environmental risks identified during compliance monitoring program that are rectified within two months	34	40	22	-18 
3. Development and implementation of strategic policy and legislation that promoted sustainable environmental outcomes	Percentage of advice and recommendations that met Ministerial approval, without the need for significant modification	99	95	99	4 
4. Waste avoided and the recovery of materials from landfill maximised	Percentage of municipal solid waste reported as diverted from landfill through recycling compared to waste strategy target in the Perth metropolitan region	32	65	36	-29 
	Percentage of commercial and industrial waste reported as diverted from landfill through recycling compared to the statewide waste strategy target	40	70	45	-25 
	Percentage of construction and demolition waste reported as diverted from landfill through recycling compared to the statewide waste strategy target	84	75	85	10 
5. Quality advice to the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) and the Minister for Environment on significant proposals and environmental issues	The EPA's satisfaction with the department's environmental impact assessment (EIA) service, during the year, in line with best practice principles of EIA	95	82	96	14 
	Percentage of project-specific conditions which did not require significant change following the appeal process	89	82	98	16 
	Percentage of assessments that met agreed timelines	79	75	80	5 
	The EPA's satisfaction with the department's provision of environmental management services during the year	97	82	97	15 
6. Compliance with Ministerial statement implementation conditions are monitored effectively	The number of Ministerial statements audited compared to targets	57	100	42	-58 



## Summary of key efficiency indicators

Service	Key efficiency indicators	2021-22	2022-23		Variance		
		Actual	Target	Actual			
Service 1	Water information and advice	Proportion of statutory referrals from decision making authorities where advice is provided within target timeframes	92%	95%	89%	-6%	↓
		Average cost per statutory referral assessment	\$5,418	\$7,960	\$6,046	-1,914	↑
		Average cost per water measurement site managed	\$5,944	\$9,389	\$6,638	-2,751	↑
Service 2	Water planning, allocation and optimisation	Average cost per plan, report or guidance document to support water planning, allocation and optimisation	\$268,753	\$282,257	\$243,074	-39,183	↑
		Average cost per hour of scientific support for water planning, allocation and optimisation	\$185	\$178	\$197	19	↓
Service 3	Water regulation, licensing and industry governance	Average cost of assessing a water licence application by risk assessment category:					
		• Low risk	\$3,348	\$3,782	\$4,018	236	↓
		• Medium risk	\$4,464	\$5,043	\$5,357	314	↓
		• High risk	\$5,580	\$6,303	\$6,697	394	↓
		Average time taken (days) to assess a licence application by risk assessment category:					
		• Low risk	35	65	43	-22	↑
		• Medium risk	52	75	57	-18	↑
		• High risk	65	95	85	-10	↑
	Average Cost of compliance monitoring and enforcement action	\$130	\$156	\$206	50	↓	
Service 4	Environmental regulation	Average cost per works approval and licence application	\$55,425	\$60,931	\$73,244	12,313	↓
		Average cost per native vegetation clearing permit application	\$30,353	\$35,895	\$33,764	-2,131	↑
Service 5	Water and environment policy	Average cost per hour of policy advice and recommendations	\$273	\$398	\$328	-70	↑
Service 6	Waste strategies	Cost of landfill levy compliance as a percentage of landfill levy income collected	1.87%	1.50%	1.64%	0.14%	↓
Service 7	Environmental impact assessment services to the EPA	Cost per standardised unit of assessment output	\$45,444	\$58,209	\$79,177	20,968	↓
Service 8	Environmental management services to the EPA	Cost per standardised unit of environmental management services output	\$26,706	\$54,191	\$26,151	-28,040	↑
Service 9	Compliance monitoring services to the Minister	Average cost per environmental audit completed	\$51,684	\$100,191	\$148,276	48,085	↓



Keep Australia Beautiful Council Beach Clean-up

# Our priorities

The department is responsible for ensuring the state's water resources and environment are healthy to support a strong economy and thriving communities. This section reflects our work delivering on the strategic directions of the Government of Western Australia.

Climate Action	20	Aboriginal engagement and advancement	34
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# Our changing climate

...the science is clear



**1.4°C**

average increase in temperature in Australia since 1910  
(BoM 2022)



**19%**

decline in May to July rainfall in south-west Australia since 1970, larger than anywhere else in Australia  
(CSIRO and BoM 2022)



**More frequent and intense**

rainfall events across WA, leading to localised flooding and infrastructure damage  
(CSIRO and BoM 2015)



**Double**

number of days over 40°C in Perth since the 1930s  
(Breshears et al. 2021)



**More human deaths**

caused by heatwaves in Australia than all other extreme weather events combined  
(Coates et al. 2022)



**24 cm**

rise in sea levels along the WA coast predicted by mid-century  
(CSIRO and BoM 2015)



**Increasing sea surface temperatures**

on average, affecting our marine environment and fisheries and causing marine heatwaves  
(CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology 2022; Caputi et al. 2016; Le Nohaïc et al. 2017)



**8%**

rise in threatened species in Australia because of climate change between 2016 and 2021  
(Murphy and van Leeuwen 2021)

## Climate Action

The department is leading implementation of the [Western Australian Climate Policy](#).

Key initiatives progressed in 2022–23 included:

- development of the [Climate Adaptation Strategy](#) to enhance climate resilience
- detailed climate change projections for Western Australia through the [Climate Science Initiative](#)
- development of the [Sectoral Emissions Reduction Strategies](#) (SERS) to support transition of Western Australia's economy to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Additionally, [Kep Katitjin – Gabi Kaadadjan Waterwise Perth Action Plan 2](#) was launched with a focus on combating climate change through water-efficiency initiatives, water-sensitive urban design and policy reviews to drive waterwise outcomes. It also has a stronger focus on actions to target climate change through enhanced collaboration across participating State Government agencies.

## State Government emissions reduction

The State Government is committed to demonstrating leadership in the transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

We are also working with other agencies to help reduce the State Government's emissions to 80 per cent below 2020 levels by 2030.

This [Government Emissions Interim Target](#) applies to emissions from all government agencies across the state and emissions generated by Government Trading Enterprises. Reductions will occur through a range of actions, including energy-efficiency upgrades, electrification, installation of onsite renewable energy and use of grid-based renewable electricity.

Over the 2022–23 financial year we have developed guidance to support agencies to measure and reduce emissions to contribute to the State Government reduction target.

## Climate Resilient WA

Adaptation is a key component of the long-term response to protect communities, livelihoods and ecosystems from climate change.

The [Climate Resilient WA directions paper](#), released in December 2022, lays the foundations for Western Australia's *Climate Adaptation Strategy*.

Four directions have been identified to accelerate immediate action and support a comprehensive, long-term approach (see below).

These directions are the result of analysis of national and international climate action, and respond to targeted consultation undertaken in 2022 and 2023 with government, environment groups, peak industry bodies and Aboriginal groups.

The State Budget of May 2023 saw almost \$40 million allocated to developing climate-resilient communities through the *Climate Adaptation Strategy*. This strategy was released in July 2023 and included new initiatives and actions to enhance resilience of industries, cities and regions.



## Sectoral Emissions Reduction Strategies

*The Western Australian Climate Policy commits to the development of SERS to guide cost-effective emissions reduction in key economic sectors.*

During 2022 and 2023 the department led the development of SERS, in collaboration with other State Government agencies. SERS will provide robust and credible emissions reduction pathways for Western Australia with tangible actions for reducing emissions consistent with the State Government's target of net zero emissions by 2050.

The strategies will address emissions from electricity generation, as well as those from industry including resources and manufacturing, transport, buildings, agriculture, waste and land use. The State Government is consulting with industry to develop sectoral strategies and aims to release a consolidated strategy by the end of 2023.

## Climate change legislation

*In January this year, the State Government made a commitment to introduce climate change legislation to establish the framework to meet Western Australia's goal of net zero by 2050.*

The legislation will ensure accountability and transparency for government. It will establish the state's long-term target and provide statutory requirements to set interim emissions reduction targets and develop policies to reduce emissions and enhance climate resilience. It will also give industry, business and investors certainty to frame their decisions and actions.





## Green Energy Approvals Initiative

On 6 December 2022 the State Government announced the establishment of the cross-government Green Energy Approvals Initiative. It will drive timely approvals of green energy projects through clear, fit-for-purpose assessment pathways that deliver strong environmental outcomes for the community.



This \$22.5 million initiative will progress delivery of green energy solutions for Western Australia, underscoring the State Government's commitment to net zero by 2050.

The implementation of this initiative has led to the creation of the Green Energy directorate within the department, starting on 1 July 2023, to:

- undertake assessments of green energy proposals
- implement novel assessment processes to increase efficiency
- develop government policy and Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) guidance to support proponents to develop high-quality submissions.

A Green Energy Major Projects group has also been established in the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation (JTSI). The Council of Regulators will oversee the Green Energy Approval Initiative, facilitating collaboration across agencies and informing the State Government of its progress.



EPA Services  
Executive Director  
Kathleen Lowry  
with Green Energy  
Executive Director  
Shaun Meredith







# Fitzroy floods

The Kimberley floods were caused by significant rain from 29 December 2022 to 6 January 2023. The flooding caused damage to Fitzroy valley and catchment, and more broadly across the West Kimberley. It significantly impacted communities, roads, housing and the pastoral industry.

The department's river level monitoring network played a key part in the emergency response. Our floodplain engineering staff in Perth are integral to analysing field data, in real time, to support Bureau of Meteorology and state emergency decisions and responses during flood events.



Watch our flood response on [YouTube](#)

On 4 January 2023 our gauging station at Fitzroy Crossing bridge reached a peak 1.5 m higher than previously recorded. This event inundated the bridge and washed it away, along with the gauging station. Four gauges – at Dimond Gorge, Fitzroy Crossing, Looma and the Fitzroy Barrage – all reached peaks ranging 1–5 m higher than previously recorded. These well exceeded the one-in-100-year levels they are designed to record.

Our North West Region team worked hard during the flood to take measurements. This included assessing damage and providing emergency repairs to our monitoring infrastructure in extremely difficult conditions, with strong support from staff at the Hydrologic Technology Centre in Welshpool. We also conducted other important work



in response to the emergency, providing support to the Derby-West Kimberley Shire and Water Corporation for waste management, urgent sewer repairs, permits for bed and banks disturbance, and strategic planning for landfills.

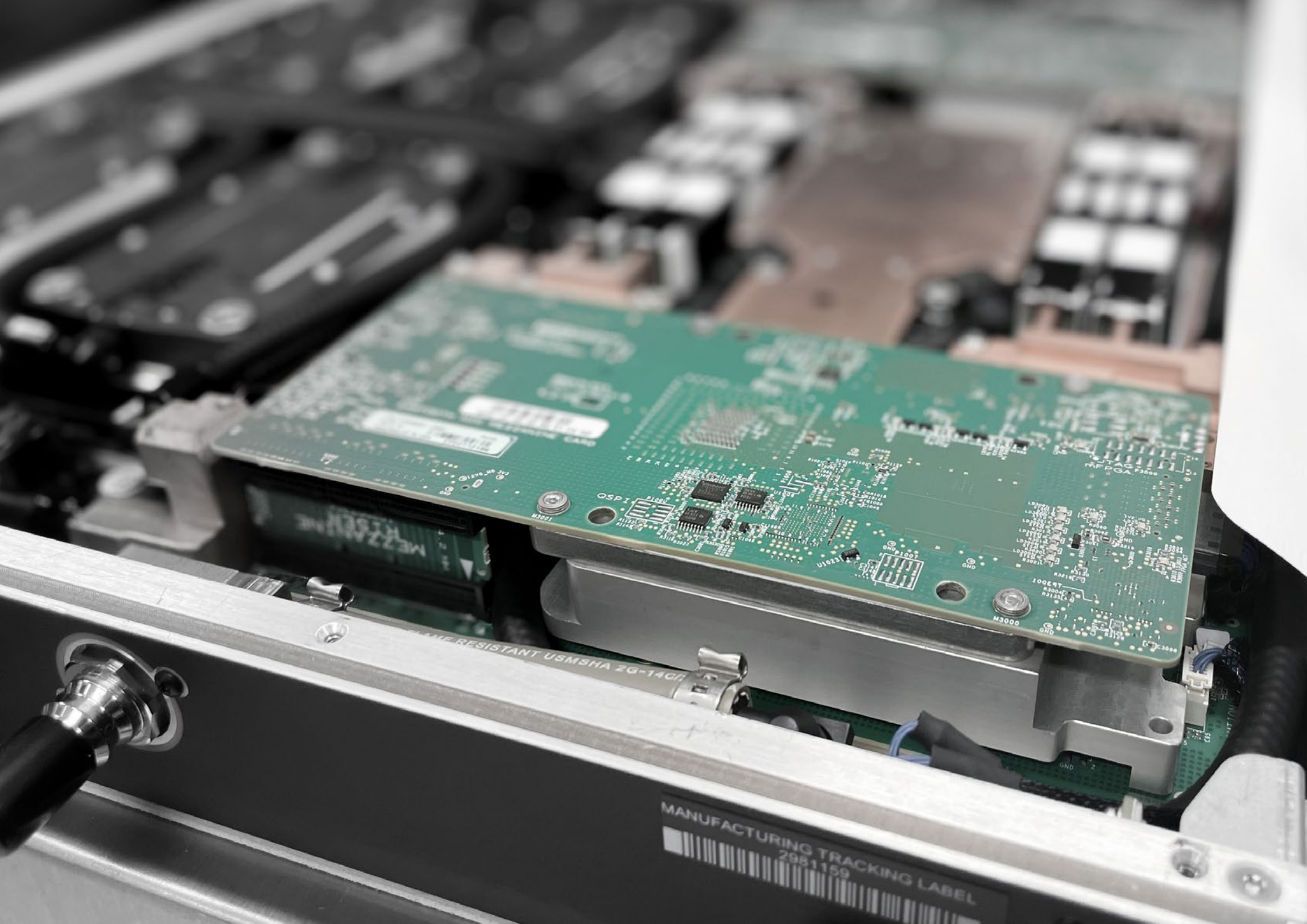
Following the floods, we continued repairs to ensure the river-level monitoring network worked for the rest of the wet season and into the future. This includes a partnership with Main Roads Western Australia to build a gauge upstream of Fitzroy to report river levels, which will assist construction of the new and improved Fitzroy Crossing Bridge.

We have also played a critical role in floodplain mapping to support roads and infrastructure reconstruction, and we are supporting the state recovery effort.



Previous page: North West measurement staff Dean Pegoraro and Scott Zahn assess flooding in the Kimberley's Kupungarri Community.





WIRELESS NETWORK CARD

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FLAME RESISTANT USMSHA 2G-14C

MANUFACTURING TRACKING LABEL  
2981159

# Pawsey supercomputing grant for climate projections

Understanding our variable and changing climate is critical to developing and implementing solutions for a resilient, low-carbon Western Australia.

The Climate Science Initiative is being led by the department in partnership with Murdoch University, the New South Wales Government's Department of Planning and Environment via the NSW and Australian Regional Climate Modelling Project (NARCIIM), and the Pawsey Supercomputing Research Centre.



Senior Manager Climate Risk and Resilience Kelly Barnes explains more about the Pawsey supercomputer

It aims to produce the most detailed and comprehensive Western Australian climate change projections ever, extending 75 years into the future.

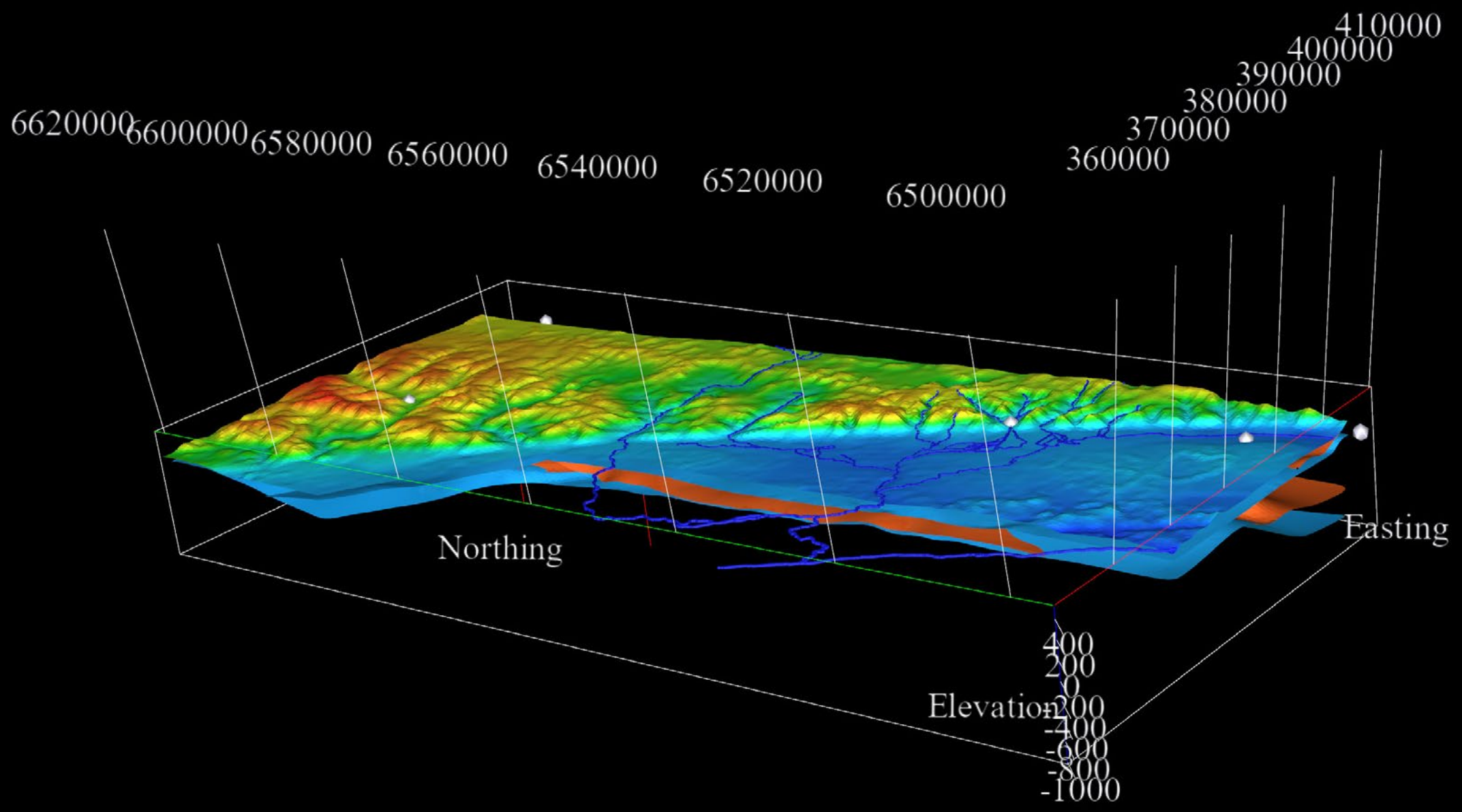
These state-of-the-art projections started at the Pawsey Supercomputing Research Centre's Setonix supercomputer in Perth this year. Setonix takes just one second to do a calculation that would take a human 1.5 billion years to achieve. It weighs 45 tonnes and contains 12 km of optical cable. Its power is equivalent to 150,000 laptops working in unison.

This work will produce our most detailed projections to date, at a grid scale of 4 km initially for the state's south-west, with the localised information used to guide policy and decision-making. The north-west of the state will continue to be covered by national climate projections at a grid scale of 20 km.

The projections will allow the State Government to prepare for the anticipated impacts of climate change, including more extreme weather events such as cyclones, floods and bushfires. They will also enable us to better protect Western Australia's unique biodiversity and ecosystems, and support major investment decisions in energy infrastructure, planning and regional development.









# State-of-the-art models keeping us ahead of change

Groundwater is Western Australia's main source of water supply for horticulture, viticulture, parks and gardens, and for public drinking water. It is also vital for lakes, wetlands and liveability.

In 2009 the National Water Commission reported Western Australia's work on modelling aquifers used for public and private water supply as world leading. Along with our science partners such as Curtin University, we have continued to evolve the understanding that underpins advanced groundwater management.

We are developing 3-D geological and hydrogeological conceptual models of how water moves through our aquifers and interacts with rivers, the ocean and the environment. This includes developing dynamic numerical models to predict risks to our groundwater such as saltwater interface movement, cumulative abstraction impacts and the influence of climate change.

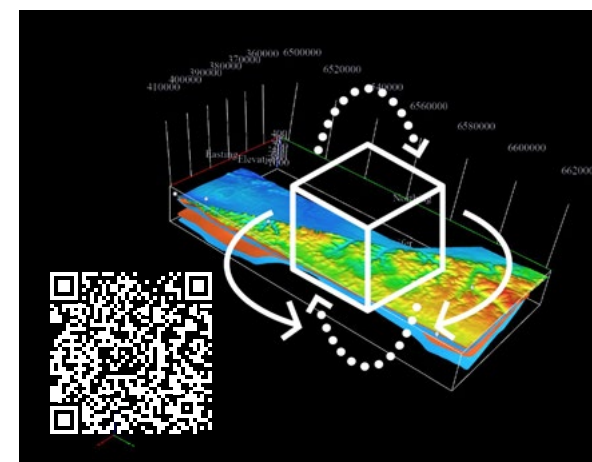
For the East Midlands Groundwater Investigation we have incorporated bore data, airborne survey data, geophysical data, existing spatial datasets, petroleum wells, monitoring data, images and chemistry.

We are also working to make our science more accessible to the public. This includes turning our data into spatial layers that can be accessed through the [Shared Location Information Platform](#), and updating the publicly available [Perth Groundwater Map](#).

This work allows us to identify locations and rates for taking groundwater that have less impact on our environment and other water users. It also helps us identify the best locations where water can be put back – replenished or recharged – into the deeper aquifers, to optimise pumping for scheme supply. It has been used to support Water Corporation's groundwater replenishment scheme.

## ► How to enable 3-D model PDFs

1. Click on the link below then download PDF on your local drive.
2. Open PDF using Acrobat Reader.
3. Acrobat will give you warning 'Multimedia and 3D content has been disabled. Enable this feature if you trust this document'. From 'Options' drop-down menu, choose the option you prefer.
4. Click on the black space (watch icon will appear). It may take a few seconds to load the interactive 3-D content.



[3-D model](#) of Aquifers in the East Midlands Groundwater Investigation created by Senior Hydrogeologist Sheryl Ryan



[Environment Online](#) went live in August 2022. This was a landmark moment for water and environmental regulation in Western Australia and a significant step forward for the digital delivery of government services for the state.

In conjunction with implementing the reforms of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (EP Act), and the proposed reforms of our water resource management legislation, Environment Online is a major part of the transformation in how we deliver our regulatory services, and how we interact with our regulatory stakeholders.

Release 1 focused on delivering information and services to **support environmental impact assessment activities** under Part IV of the EP Act.

It is a secure digital platform with a vision of providing a single gateway for all water and environmental regulatory activities, automated case management, and an integrated data management system.

Release 1 focused on delivering information and services to support environmental impact assessment activities under Part IV of the EP Act. Importantly, Release 1 also delivered a foundational platform that will be built on in future releases and allows for integration with a wide range of information, geospatial, financial and identity management systems.

Minor releases have continued to be deployed, introducing a range of product enhancements and features, as well as addressing bug fixes.

An independent external review of Environment Online was completed during the year. The review provided evidence-based recommendations to the department to inform the direction and ongoing development and design of the platform.

Guided by the review recommendations, Environment Online is being repositioned as an enabling project within our larger Reform Roadmap, rather than being the driver of business reform, and will support service integration and enable digital transformation.

We are also assessing the functionality to be built in future releases, to ensure alignment with our Reform Roadmap as well as State Government priorities including the Green Energy Approvals Initiative and [Streamline WA](#).

Current work includes the analysis and design of core regulatory capabilities including fees and payments, geospatial services, data analytics, expert advice, subscriptions, data migration from legacy systems and further development of the foundational platform.

Increased opportunities for stakeholder involvement and co-design will be developed, and we look forward to continuing to work with stakeholders in future developments of our online services.

## Waste in the regions – Carnarvon horticultural waste initiative

The Gascoyne is home to one of the state's major food bowls, and the flows of the Gascoyne River are the lifeblood of the horticultural industry that makes Carnarvon its home.

Waste that has been inappropriately disposed of poses a high risk to this water resource, the horticultural industry and the community.

Over time the combination of floods and industry waste, along with other waste streams, has created a problem for the local environment.

In 2020, our Mid West Gascoyne region team initiated a working group to understand and address the concerns raised by local stakeholders about poor waste management practices. Recognising that waste management is a shared responsibility, the working group included representatives from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), Shire of Carnarvon, Carnarvon Growers Association, and Vegetables WA.



In May 2022 the [Carnarvon Floodplain Management Working Group Report](#), endorsed by then Minister of Water Dave Kelly and then Minister for Agriculture and Food Alannah MacTiernan, identified waste management as one of the five key focus areas to improve floodplain management.

Key stakeholders are now working together to implement the recommendations from the Working Group Report. Some of the initiatives underway include:

- community involvement through education drives and waste collection for disposal through the Containers for Change program
- identification of greener initiatives through a two-year biodegradable horticultural 'plastics' research project
- investigation into reduction in plastics generation through a 'closed system' plastics recycling business that generates new jobs for the town to support unskilled workers
- expansion of the types of chemical drums accepted at the landfill for collection and redirection

- development of a 'best practice land management' approach within the horticultural community
- a horticultural clean-up campaign, including a three-month exemption of waste disposal fees for Carnarvon growers.

A second waste audit was planned for September 2023.

The ongoing commitment shown by key partners is a testament to the region's initiative, collaboration and desire to make a positive difference on waste issues within Carnarvon. With the broader community on board, we are jointly solving the problem and changing mindsets and behaviours for the future.



Chemical drums found during the Gascoyne waste audit



# WA Plan for Plastics

## single-use plastic bans

### 2022–25

Plastic waste poses a significant threat to the health of marine, freshwater and land-based wildlife and ecosystems.










Single-use plastics contaminate recycling waste streams and mostly end up in landfill or as litter, and are a problem waste stream being addressed through [Western Australia's Plan for Plastics](#).

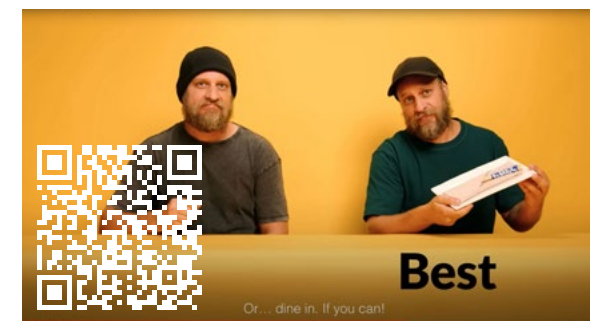
Staged bans of sale or supply of these items started in 2022 and there are now penalties for the sale and supply of banned single-use plastic items.

These first stage changes alone are estimated to save up to 181 million plastic cups, 300 million plastic straws, 50 million pieces of plastic cutlery and more than 110 million thick plastic shopping bags from landfill every year.

More problem plastic products have been targeted in [Stage 2 of the Plan for Plastics](#), which came into effect on 27 February 2023, following consultation with key stakeholders and the community from September to November 2022.

This second set of single-use or disposable plastic items and materials will be phased out between 1 September 2023 and 1 July 2025. The Stage 2 regulations ban the sale and supply of:

	loose and moulded expanded polystyrene packaging		coffee cups and lids
	degradable plastics (plastics designed to break up more rapidly into fragments under certain conditions)		produce bags
	lids for cups, bowls, trays, plates and takeaway food containers		cotton buds with plastic stems
	expanded polystyrene cups and food trays for raw meat and seafood		microbeads
	trays for food not covered in the Stage 1 ban		



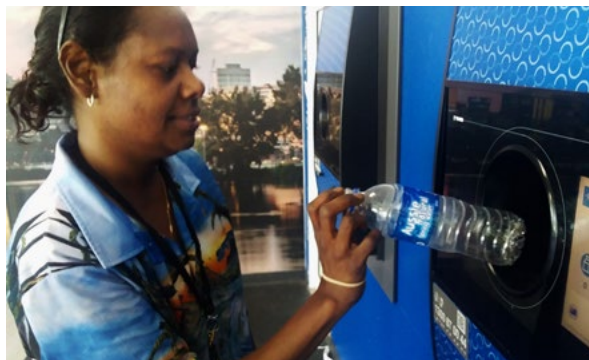
Watch our Plan for Plastics campaign on [YouTube](#)

# Containers for Change

[Containers for Change, the container deposit scheme, continues to transform the way Western Australians recycle drink containers.](#)

Launched in October 2020, the scheme is helping to reduce litter and increase recycling as well as creating new business and employment opportunities across the state.

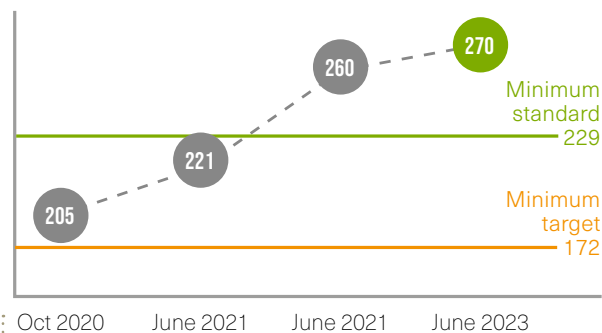
Containers for Change is run by WA Return Recycle Renew Ltd, a not-for-profit company, with the department administering the legislative framework to support the scheme.



The collection network comprises 270 refund points, from Kalumburu in the far north to Esperance on the south coast. More than 820 jobs have been created by the scheme, with about 30 per cent of employment going to people living with disability, Indigenous Australians or long-term unemployed.

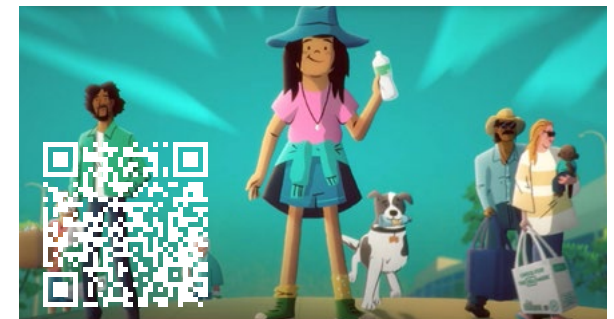
By the end of June 2023 more than 2.39 billion containers had been recovered for recycling and more than \$8.8 million donated to more than 6,200 registered charities and community organisations.

Increased numbers of refund points



By the end of June 2023 **more than 2.39 billion** containers had been recovered for recycling and **more than \$8.8 million** donated to **more than 6,200** registered charities and community organisations.

Consultation is now underway to expand the scheme to include glass bottles containing grape wine and spirits up to 3 litres, and all containers up to 3 litres containing fruit and vegetable juice, flavoured milk and cordial.



Learn more about Containers for Change on [YouTube](#)





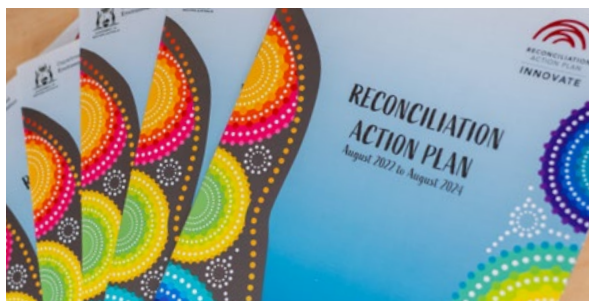
## Aboriginal engagement and advancement

Aboriginal Water and Environment Advisory Group member Dr Anne Poelina at Doondalup (Lake Joondalup)



## Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2022–24

The launch of the department's second *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan* (RAP) took place on 30 August 2022 with a Noongar smoking ceremony and a Welcome to Country performed by Nick Abraham, owner and lead guide at Warrang-Bridil.



Nygarie Goyal, Jillian Collard, Minister Reece Whitby, Colleen Hayward, Carol Innes, Nick Abraham, Lincoln Abraham and Michelle Andrews

Our RAP is the result of extensive consultation and collaboration with key stakeholders, including our Aboriginal staff and members of our Aboriginal Water and Environment Advisory Group (AWEAG).



Nick Abraham conducts the smoking ceremony

## Our key RAP focus areas

Strengthen our relationships with First Nations peoples, communities, councils, corporations and relevant Traditional Owners through greater understanding and mutual respect.

Increase the department's representation of First Nations staff and provide career development pathways and leadership opportunities.

Participate in and contribute respectfully to native title negotiations.

Develop an Aboriginal Cultural and Native Title Learning Framework, and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Procurement Strategy.

Review governance arrangements for Aboriginal outcomes that clarify accountabilities and ensure they are fit-for-purpose.



KEP KATITJIN  
GABI KAADADJAN  
Waterwise Perth Action Plan 2





## Kep Katitjin – Gabi Kaadadjan Waterwise Perth Action Plan 2

We share a vision with our state’s First Nations peoples, to heal the waterways and develop an approach to delivering enduring waterwise outcomes on Noongar Country.



Michelle Andrews, Bindjareb Elders Franklyn Nannup and George Walley, then Water Minister Dave Kelly, Danjoo Koorliny Co-Director Richard Walley and Water Corporation CEO Pat Donovan

*Kep Katitjin – Gabi Kaadadjan* is our new strategy for Boorloo (Perth) and Bindjareb (Peel) which builds on our first Waterwise Perth Action Plan and focuses on an increased partnership with Noongar people. It has been co-designed with Bindjareb Elders and the leadership group of [Danjoo Koorliny](#), an Aboriginal-led initiative which looks to improve the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Western Australia.

Transforming Boorloo and Bindjareb into Waterwise communities is a huge task.

To achieve it, we want to strengthen our collaboration with Aboriginal groups and, specifically, work on delivery of the ‘Walking Together’ initiatives within *Kep Katitjin – Gabi Kaadadjan*.



Designer Darryl Bellotti



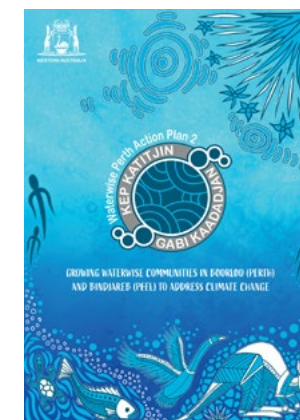
Waterwise team members Patrick Ridley, Winsome MacLaurin and Penny Jackson

### ► The Kep Katitjin – Gabi Kaadadjan water story

The artwork for *Kep Katitjin – Gabi Kaadadjan* was designed by Darryl Bellotti, a Yamatji and Noongar man.

‘Without water we cannot survive. We, as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike, now have a shared responsibility of carrying out that obligation for the survival of culture, the people, and all living things,’ says Darryl.

[Listen to Darryl's story behind the artwork.](#)



Listen to Darryl's story behind the artwork.





The \$60.3 million [Green Jobs Plan](#) created projects and initiatives which had a strong focus on Aboriginal jobs, advancement and working on Country.

It was coordinated by the department and, from July 2020 to December 2022, more than 600 jobs were created.

Green Jobs was part of the State Government's \$5.8 billion [WA Recovery Plan](#) to help drive economic and social recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

While these initiatives have now finished, many Green Jobs projects will continue with environmental outcomes such as revegetation, weed control, and stock exclusion fencing.



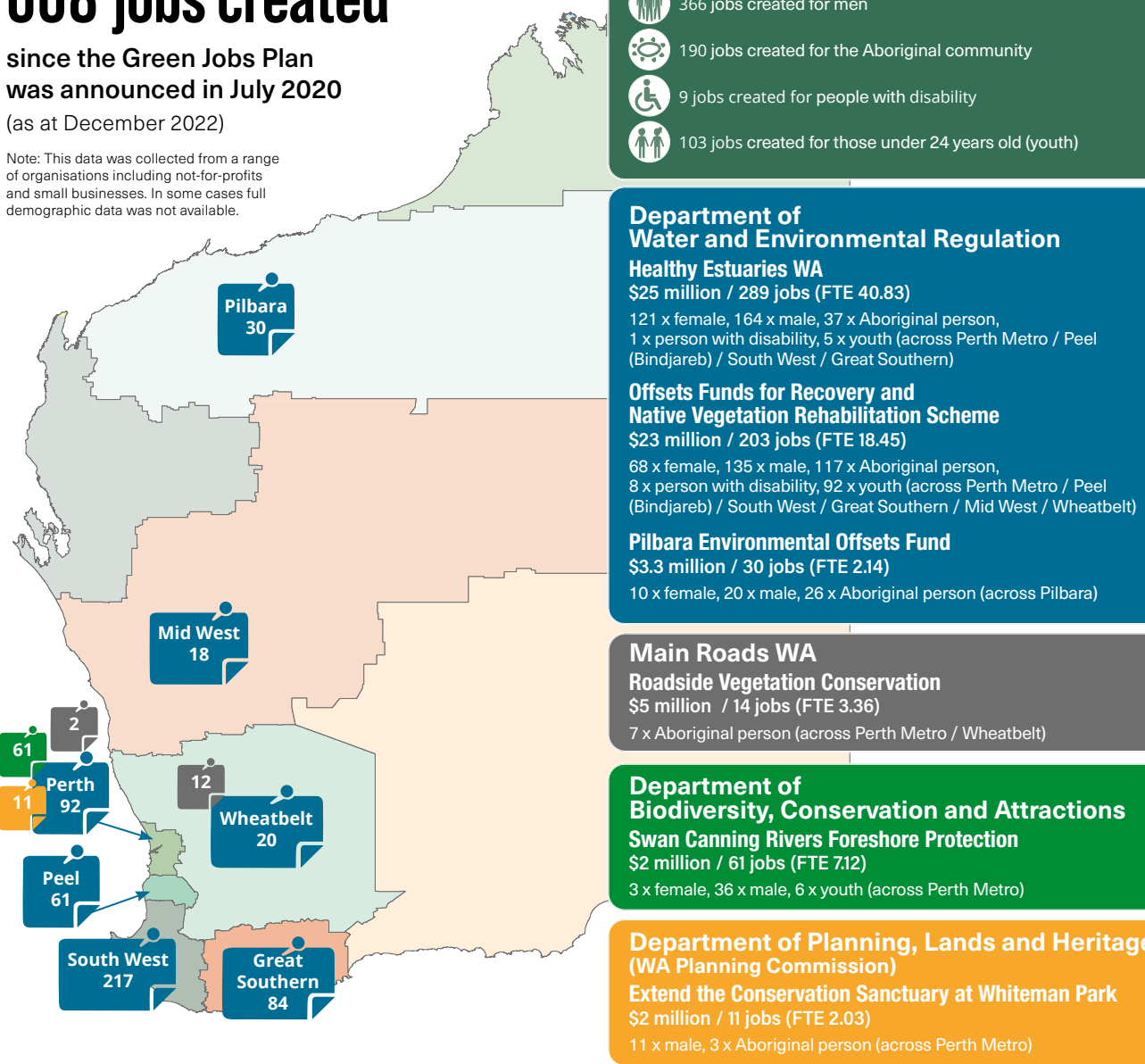
The Mt Barker Aboriginal Ranger team with Greening Australia staff at a revegetation project site near Cranbrook

## 608 jobs created

since the Green Jobs Plan was announced in July 2020

(as at December 2022)

Note: This data was collected from a range of organisations including not-for-profits and small businesses. In some cases full demographic data was not available.



**Breakdown of jobs created under the Green Jobs Plan**  
July 2020 - December 2022

- 608 jobs created** including:
  - 202 jobs created for women
  - 366 jobs created for men
  - 190 jobs created for the Aboriginal community
  - 9 jobs created for people with disability
  - 103 jobs created for those under 24 years old (youth)

**Department of Water and Environmental Regulation**

**Healthy Estuaries WA**  
\$25 million / 289 jobs (FTE 40.83)  
121 x female, 164 x male, 37 x Aboriginal person, 1 x person with disability, 5 x youth (across Perth Metro / Peel (Bindjareb) / South West / Great Southern)

**Offsets Funds for Recovery and Native Vegetation Rehabilitation Scheme**  
\$23 million / 203 jobs (FTE 18.45)  
68 x female, 135 x male, 117 x Aboriginal person, 8 x person with disability, 92 x youth (across Perth Metro / Peel (Bindjareb) / South West / Great Southern / Mid West / Wheatbelt)

**Pilbara Environmental Offsets Fund**  
\$3.3 million / 30 jobs (FTE 2.14)  
10 x female, 20 x male, 26 x Aboriginal person (across Pilbara)

**Main Roads WA**

**Roadside Vegetation Conservation**  
\$5 million / 14 jobs (FTE 3.36)  
7 x Aboriginal person (across Perth Metro / Wheatbelt)

**Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions**

**Swan Canning Rivers Foreshore Protection**  
\$2 million / 61 jobs (FTE 7.12)  
3 x female, 36 x male, 6 x youth (across Perth Metro)

**Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (WA Planning Commission)**

**Extend the Conservation Sanctuary at Whiteman Park**  
\$2 million / 11 jobs (FTE 2.03)  
11 x male, 3 x Aboriginal person (across Perth Metro)

## Aboriginal empowerment and governance

The department's commitment to Aboriginal engagement and empowerment manifests itself in the new Aboriginal Engagement and Partnership Branch.

In its first full year of operation the branch:

- championed State Government priorities and initiatives to maximise outcomes for First Nations peoples in business planning and direction setting
- identified and led opportunities for statewide government collaboration in Aboriginal engagement, and delivery of the State Government [Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy](#) and Western Australia's [Closing the Gap Jurisdictional Implementation Plan](#)
- monitored progress and delivery of the department's second RAP.

In addition, the Aboriginal Empowerment Board was established in August 2022. It leads and guides the department's commitment and vision for ongoing reconciliation and the engagement and empowerment of Aboriginal peoples and communities through our business activities.

The Board meets quarterly and is made up of our Corporate Executive and Aboriginal staff, and includes Jason Barrow who is Co-Chair of AWEAG. Jason is a Noongar man from the south-west of

Western Australia and a member of the Danjoo Koorliny leadership team.

To contribute to Aboriginal empowerment and ensure that cultural values and economic, social and spiritual wellbeing are respected, the department has four principles:



Michelle Andrews and Jason Barrow are Co-Chairs of AWEAG

### ► New role of Director Aboriginal Engagement and Partnerships



Jillian Collard with Grant Rigney, Co-Chair of the Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Water Interests

The appointment of Jillian Collard to the new role of Director Aboriginal Engagement and Partnerships reflects the department's priorities of greater inclusion of First Nations Australians and women in leadership roles.

Jillian is a Noongar leader with connections to the Whadjuk, Ballardong and Wilman groups. It was announced during Reconciliation Week, on 29 May 2023, that Jillian would be joining the department's Corporate Executive, for 12 months from 1 July, as part of the Public Sector Commission's Women in Executive Leadership Development Experience Initiative.

## Danjoo Koorliny Social Impact Summit

We continue to strengthen our relationship with [Danjoo Koorliny](#), and were represented at the annual two-day Danjoo Koorliny Walking Together Social Impact Summit from 30 November 2022.

The theme was 'Caring for Boodja: By Us, For Us, With Us', which focused on the environment and connecting with and healing Boodja (Country). Hosted by The University of Western Australia, many members of our staff attended this opportunity to meet, learn, share and collaborate.

Our shared vision for reconciliation and delivering better outcomes for Aboriginal people and our environment provides a strong basis to move forward together. We have a firm commitment for a longer-term strategic partnership through a secondment opportunity for a department employee to work with Danjoo Koorliny through the Centre for Social Impact. Our Waterwise Cities Program Manager, Winsome MacLaurin, became the first person to take up this opportunity in December 2022.



Artists connecting with Country

## Doondalup meet a shared water interest

In May 2023 the department hosted a meeting with members of the [Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Water Interests \(CAWI\)](#) and representatives from AWEAG.

CAWI advises the National Water Reform Committee and identifies and prioritises national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander water reform directions. It has 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members from across Australia.

The meeting started with a Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony conducted by Noongar Elder Kevin Fitzgerald, followed by a cultural immersion on the banks of Doondalup, the Noongar name for Lake Joondalup which means the lake that glistens.



Jason Barrow and Michelle Andrews present a message stick to Rene Woods and Grant Rigney at the Doondalup meet

Along with representatives from the Australian Government's Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, our staff offered insights on water management in Western Australia.

There were also discussions about opportunities through native title and the proposed modernisation of the state's water legislation, through the Water Reform Bill, to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' access to water and participation in water management.



Noongar Elder Kevin Fitzgerald





Our capabilities



## Graduate Program

The department launched a new [Graduate Program](#) in 2022 to attract some of the brightest young minds in the country to work for us. In February 2023 we were delighted to be included as a Top Graduate Employer by the Australian Association of Graduate Employers.

Our 12-month Graduate Program aims to build the skills, experience and networks required for a successful career in the Western Australian public sector. It has a customised rotation plan designed around our needs and graduate interests, providing opportunities to experience and work on statewide projects and initiatives.

Recruitment for our 2023 Graduate Program, and our new [Aboriginal Graduate Program](#), began in June 2023.

This new campaign benefited from support by the Public Sector Commission's [A place of opportunity](#) graduate campaign, which brought more than 25 graduate and internship programs into a single State Government initiative.

It partners with leaders in the mining, engineering, transport, resource, urban and regional planning and development, tourism, construction, and agricultural sectors to help attract graduates. Our very own 2022 graduate officer Chelsea Wenden featured in the promotion.



Watch graduate Chelsea Wenden's testimonial on [YouTube](#)

## ► Carbon literacy

Carbon literacy is a big part of our Graduate Program. This initiative is aligned with the UK-based [Carbon Literacy Project](#), which describes it as: 'An awareness of the carbon dioxide costs and impacts of everyday activities, and the ability and motivation to reduce emissions, on an individual, community and organisational basis'.

Our training has been developed with Edith Cowan University's School of Business and Law. It recognises and supports our lead role in delivering the *Western Australian Climate Policy* and is tailored for Western Australia. It is the first of its kind to be delivered in our state's public sector.

Our Reform Roadmap, spurred by the Public Sector Commission Agency Capability Review, drives us to build capability in our workforce and embed a carbon focus across all aspects of our operations.

We have also extended the training to non-graduate staff.

## ► Empowering our young staff

Findings from a 2022 International Youth Day survey project, conducted by the department's inaugural graduate cohort, prompted the creation of a networking group aimed at empowering young staff members.

Those surveyed expressed a desire for enhanced engagement, a stronger sense of community, improved recruitment and retention processes, and opportunities for training and upskilling.

The Youth Outreach, Understanding, and Networking Group (YOUNG) was officially launched during Youth Week WA celebrations in April, and is intended to cater to staff members aged 30 and below.

YOUNG operates as a peer-led support system across the agency, providing a platform for young staff members to voice their opinions and express their concerns.

The group's objective is to foster a supportive environment for all young employees with a plan to provide opportunities for intergenerational connection, knowledge sharing, upskilling and volunteering.



The YOUNG networking group launched in Youth Week 2023

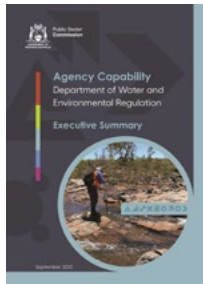


YOUNG is organised by Chelsea Wenden and Nick Gibb



# Governance

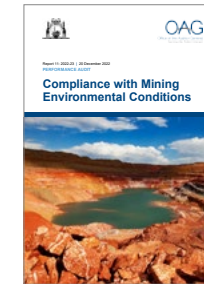
## Agency Capability Review report



A review of the department was carried out between November 2021 and June 2022 as part of the Public Sector Commission’s sector-wide [Agency Capability Review Program](#).

The [review](#) was published in September 2022. It acknowledged our committed and values-based workforce with strong science knowledge and policy skills, and our effective relationships across government and with our statutory boards and committees.

## Office of the Auditor General report



In 2022 the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) undertook a performance audit of our compliance and enforcement program for environmental conditions surrounding mining approvals. [Report 11: 2022–23 Performance Audit: Compliance with Mining Environmental Conditions](#) was published on 20 December 2022.

This audit looked at our department and the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (DMIRS) and considered whether we were meeting public expectations in the performance of our regulatory function in the resources sector.

The Auditor General made six recommendations for us and DMIRS jointly to improve compliance activities. We are committed to addressing the matters raised in the report and have developed an implementation plan for the recommendations.

The OAG report also assists us to prioritise and accelerate the changes underway to improve our regulatory capabilities.

The review	Our response
<p>Improvements were suggested for us to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• become the lead agency in climate action</li> <li>• integrate the delivery of our services to increase regional development and effectively partner with Traditional Owners</li> <li>• get better at building and recruiting staff capacity</li> <li>• strengthen communications with our customers</li> <li>• restructure and strengthen our executive’s capability in strategic planning and decision-making.</li> </ul>	<p>The department has embarked on a Reform Roadmap, and is pursuing a new portfolio-based operating model which will enable us to collectively focus our efforts into three key areas: Climate and Sustainability, Approvals, and Strategy and Performance.</p> <p>While some elements of the new portfolios were still in staff consultation at June 2023, Dennis O’Reilly was appointed Deputy Director General Strategy and Performance in January 2023, and Emily Briggs was appointed Deputy Director General Climate and Sustainability in April 2023.</p> <p>Implementation of the new structure progressed from 1 August 2023.</p>

Matters raised in the report will be addressed by our progress in merging software systems, increasing our digital capability and improving online service delivery through Environment Online.

The reform of our processes and business practices is now central to every business unit. This work is progressing in response to the Agency Capability Review and through our Reform Roadmap.

We are committed to greater evaluation of our practices and programs. As part of our reform, a new Governance, Risk and Audit branch has been created.



The department's Prime House head office. Picture: Davin Storey



# Stakeholder, customer and community insights

## Stakeholder research

The department undertakes annual surveys of our stakeholders and customers to fulfil our key performance indicator reporting requirement about the proportion of stakeholders (and customers) who perceive the department to be effectively managing the state's water as a resource for sustainable productive use. It also helps inform our assessments of program effectiveness.

Overall stakeholder and customer sentiment towards the department was more positive this year. Improved customer perceptions of our decision-making, timeliness of outcomes and communications have contributed to this.

We also received a high rating for 'positive interactions' compared with other State Government organisations, which means the majority of our survey sample rated business and engagement with the department equal to or better than with other state agencies.

Our key performance indicator results are discussed in full from page 158.



More than half of those surveyed who have used **Environment Online** say it has improved interactions with the department.



## Water priorities

**Water-related issues** are still priorities for our stakeholders and the public.



## Waste management

Sentiment **waste management** effectiveness was strong among stakeholders but weakened among customers and community.

**Stakeholder**  
'I've had good dealings in the past two years and there have been improvements. We regularly meet them and work together.'

**Public**  
'The department has become extremely positive to deal with. Their vision and attendance to issues are flawless. Having dealt with many government departments over the years in different fields, we find this department and its direction and implementations, above par.'

The graphic features two stylized human figures. On the left, a man with a beard and a teal shirt has a teal speech bubble above him containing a stakeholder quote. On the right, a woman with black hair and a red shirt has a red speech bubble above her containing a public quote. The background is white with a faint grid pattern.



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