



Department of Water and
Environmental Regulation



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ANNUAL REPORT

Department of Water and Environmental Regulation

Prime House, 8 Davidson Terrace
Joondalup WA 6027
Locked Bag 10 Joondalup DC WA 6919

Phone: 08 6364 7000
Fax: 08 6364 7001
National Relay Service 13 36 77

wa.gov.au/dwer

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Front cover: Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Network (TERN) staff Nikki Francis conducting point-intercept cover survey in native grassland on Muntulgura Guruma country, Pilbara region, for the WA Vegetation Extent (WAVE) project. Photo: Kirrily Blaycock (TERN Australia)

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Statement of compliance

For the year ended 30 June 2025

Hon Don Punch MLA

Minister for Water;
Climate Resilience

Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC

Minister for the Environment

Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson MLA

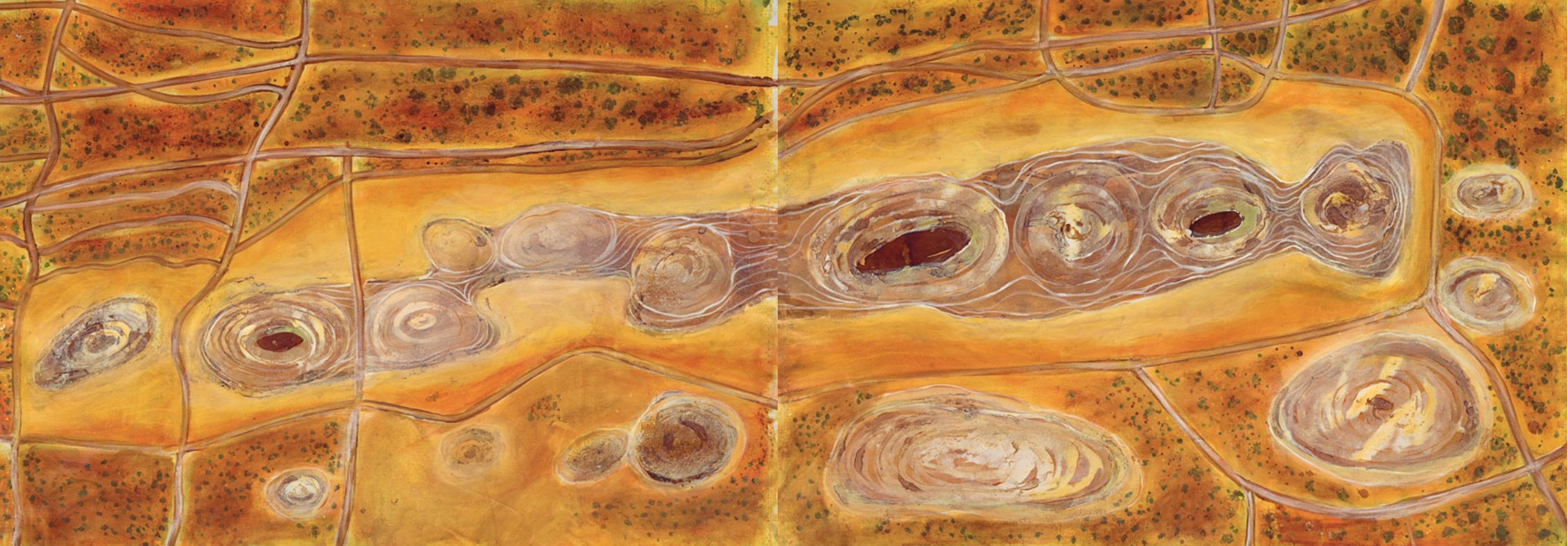
Minister for Energy and
Decarbonisation

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 2025.

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



Alistair Jones
Director General
14 October 2025



Acknowledgement of Country

DWER acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we live and work throughout Western Australia and we pay our respects to Elders past and present. DWER recognises the practice of intergenerational care for Country and its relevance to our work and working with the community. DWER continues to move forward with a shared commitment to protect and conserve Country for our future generations.

'Water and Pathways' by Sharyn Egan

Water to me is the source of all life. Water provides a focus around which life can take on meaning and social interactions as well as the interactions with all the other creatures that are around us. The lines around the lakes represent the ancient paths and the modern roads and highways. (Source: Words taken from 'Water and Pathways' artwork commissioning plaque DWER head office Prime House Joondalup)



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Executive summary



This year the Department reached more significant milestones in our transformation of service delivery to meet government priorities for environmental protection and economic diversification.

A major overhaul of our environmental approvals system alongside reforms to our environmental legislation, means we are prepared for the government's direction to keep our environment and economy healthy, while preparing Western Australians for the impacts of climate change.

The Department has important roles to play in balancing protection of the State's environment and water resources while supporting economic and social development.

Through our transformation journey, we are enabling Government plans to bring online critical minerals, hydrogen production, downstream processing, and manufacturing projects that will diversify the economy, including empowering Aboriginal communities, corporations and businesses in alignment with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

Our environmental assessment and licensing capacity has been bolstered with \$16.7 million in new funding to support strategic government focus associated with State Agreements, particularly water and infrastructure planning in the nation's mining 'engine room' of the Pilbara.

We are providing the latest climate science to Government, industry and the public to inform our major climate challenges, and our science is tracking similar and different climate futures, depending on where you live in our large and diverse state.

Our new Ministerial portfolio priority of Climate Resilience accelerates the adaptation response work already undertaken by the Department, supported by almost \$40 million in new funding. It includes delivery of high-resolution climate projections and sector adaptation plans to identify sector-specific climate impacts and priority actions to enhance resilience.

The southern half of the state is becoming drier and hotter. Last December's low to severe intensity heatwaves across much of Western Australia highlights our need to act on rising temperatures.

The creation of the Energy and Decarbonisation Ministerial portfolio by the State Government in March 2025 focuses the integration of net zero emissions and reform to the energy sector.

The direction aligns with the Department's focus on green and clean energy to accelerate hydrogen hubs, green iron and steel and electricity generation using wind and solar resources.

At a local level, urban design strategies through Waterwise programs managed by the Department and Water Corporation have focused on conserving water resources and supporting creation of climate-resilient communities through water efficient buildings and businesses, public open spaces, urban greening, biodiversity, tree canopy and urban cooling.

We are expanding our Waterwise activities to regional areas as they are vital to how we respond, and adapt, our urban spaces in a changing climate.

Our circular economy is being driven by progress in the beverage container deposit scheme, food and organics recycling and our nation leading plan for reducing problem plastics. Our programs are delivering less litter, less pollution, and increased material recovery, and at the same time creating income opportunities for businesses and the community.

At a Corporate and Organisational level, we have completed the first year of our Portfolio Operation Model. This included the establishment of the new Statewide Delivery Directorate to integrate services across the seven regions we operate in.

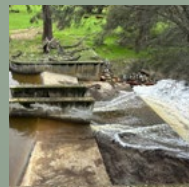
This work on our state-wide delivery sets up the integration of Part V and Water licensing which supports the new Parallel Decision Making Policy along with the creation of a Heavy Industries branch and increased hydrogeology roles that increase capability and capacity of our teams.

This also closes out our response to the Agency Capability Review and sets us well for the future.

With new technologies, the continuing deployment of our flagship digital project Environment Online, and the beginnings of safe and responsible harnessing of Artificial Intelligence to drive our environmental regulatory mission, the year ahead promises to be an even more transformative one.



Alistair Jones
Director General



Our 2024–25 at a glance

37
climate adaptation
actions
complete or underway



WasteSorted
Community
Education
Grants

✓ OPEN NOW



13.4
million in
waste grants
since 2017–18



7.2 million invested
to replace lost tree
canopy

8.5 million supporting
First Nations
energy transition

CleanEnergy
FutureFund

1,000 seagrass
observations
recorded



9,192

automated water info
requests processed



43

new or refreshed
Waterwise Actions



4,380 billion litres
of water licensed





350,000
households
now using FOGO



386
jobs supported
through 16 projects recycling
378,850 tonnes of waste



1,700+
businesses supported
to go plastic free



11,352 reports
submitted to
EnviroWatch

333 new monitoring
bore telemetry
systems



4 years
of Best Practice
cyber security



4.25 billion containers recycled
= \$15 million (for 8,000 charities, community groups and schools) + 900 jobs,
container deposit scheme is making it happen

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.

A group of five people, three men and two women, are standing on a dirt path next to a solar-powered water pump. They are all wearing waders and hats, suggesting they are engaged in field work. The pump is a green cylindrical unit with a solar panel mounted on a pole above it. In the background, there are trees and a white pickup truck parked on the dirt road. The ground is reddish-brown dirt.

Overview

Our vision

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

Our mission



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



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



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



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

Our values



- 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 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 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.



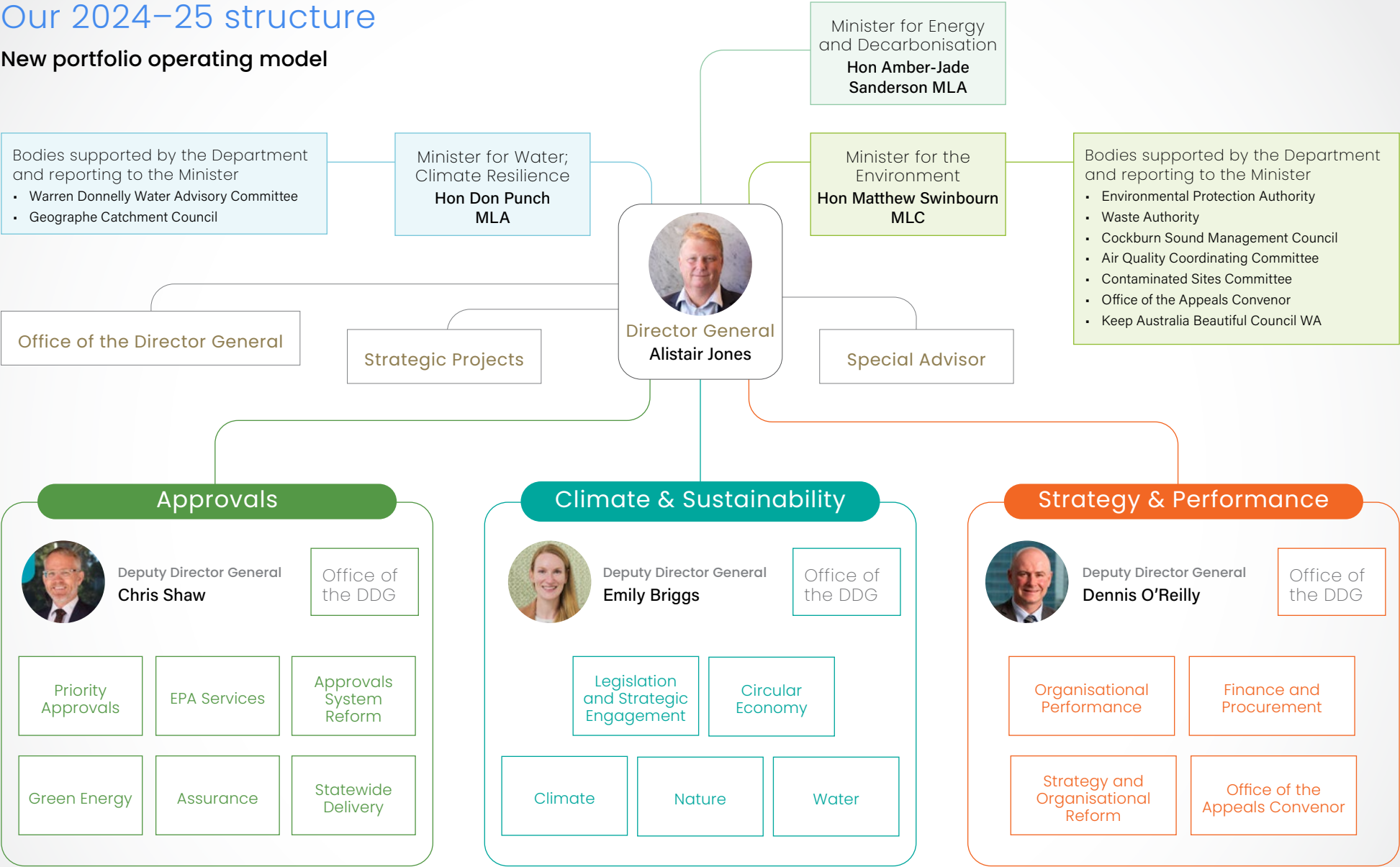
- We embrace new ideas and innovation.
- We are mindful of both the big picture and local place-based information in our work.
- We are flexible and seek better ways to do our work, and we learn from our mistakes.
- We are adaptable and resilient in the face of change.



- 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 2024–25 structure

New portfolio operating model



Alistair Jones

Director General

Alistair joined the Department as Director General in January 2024. He is dedicated to protecting Western Australia’s environment and water resources and is excited to be leading the Department through the major reform of the state’s environmental approvals system.

Alistair arrived from the Department of Treasury, where he was Assistant Under Treasurer of the Economic Business Unit and, before that, Assistant Under Treasurer of Strategic Policy and Evaluation. With more than 15 years in State Government, his leadership roles include Acting Director General of the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation in 2023.



Chris Shaw

Deputy Director General
Approvals

Chris joined the Department in November 2023, bringing extensive experience in regulatory decision-making, strategic policy and major reforms. He previously served as Deputy Director General at Queensland’s Department of Energy and Public Works where he led the formation of a division for future industries.

With a strong track record in cross-government reforms in environmental and natural resource management, Chris has overseen the establishment of the Approvals portfolio which integrates all regulatory functions. He is dedicated to advancing the State Government’s environmental approvals reform agenda and supporting key areas such as housing, green energy and critical minerals.



Emily Briggs

Deputy Director General
Climate and Sustainability

Emily became the inaugural Deputy Director General Climate and Sustainability in April 2023, bringing international experience in decarbonisation and economic development across government and the private sector. Emily began her career at BP Australia and has held senior roles in the UK Government, focusing on renewable energy, Brexit and the COVID Green Economic Recovery.

Passionate about climate action and ensuring the long-term prosperity of Western Australia, Emily has overseen the establishment of the Climate and Sustainability portfolio which is delivering key policies to support the state’s transition to net zero emissions.



Dennis O’Reilly

Deputy Director General
Strategy and Performance

With more than 20 years of public sector experience, Dennis joined the Department in January 2023, leading corporate services, strategy and engagement. He has driven the Department’s response to the Public Sector Commission’s Agency Capability Review, introducing initiatives to enhance integrity, program planning, and customer and stakeholder experiences.

Dennis is committed to the agency’s regional work and partnerships with First Nations people. Previously, he served as Executive Director Regional Services at the Department of Transport, delivering services to regional and remote communities, and transforming Corporate Services into a high-performing, customer-focused team.





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 (KPIs).

KPIs 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 101.

Financial targets	2023–24 Actual (\$'000)	2024–25 Budget (\$'000)	2024–25 Actual (\$'000)	2024–25 Variance (\$'000)
Total cost of services (i.e. endorsed expense limit)	240,581	305,976	267,562	38,414
Net cost services (details in the income statement)	72,784	126,646	106,518	20,128
Total equity (details in the statement of financial position)	735,261	738,482	817,979	-79,497
Agreed salary expense level	116,624	134,678	138,034	-3,356
Working cash limit	11,196	14,373	12,331	2,042

Summary of key effectiveness indicators

Outcome	Key effectiveness indicator	2023-24	2024-25		
		Actual %	Target %	Actual %	Variance %
1. Outcome: 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	63	65	38	-27 ↓
	Proportion of priority growth areas that have a water supply planning strategy	100	33	22	-11 ↓
2. Outcome: 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	81	100	97	-3 ↓
	Percentage of potential environmental risks identified during compliance monitoring program that are rectified within two months	19	40	16	-24 ↓
3. Outcome: 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	98	3 ↑
4. Outcome: 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	36	N/A ^(a)	N/A ^(a)	N/A ^(a)
	Percentage of Commercial and Industrial Waste reported as diverted from landfill through recycling compared to the statewide waste strategy target	46	N/A ^(a)	N/A ^(a)	N/A ^(a)
	Percentage of Construction and Demolition Waste reported as diverted from landfill through recycling compared to the statewide waste strategy target	85	N/A ^(a)	N/A ^(a)	N/A ^(a)
5. Outcome: Quality advice to the EPA and the Minister for the Environment on significant proposals and environmental issues:	The Environmental Protection Authority's satisfaction with the Department's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) service, during the year, in line with Best Practice Principles of EIA	93	90	87	-3 ↓
	Percentage of project-specific conditions which did not require significant change following the appeal process	89	90	67	-23 ↓
	Percentage of assessments that met agreed timelines	88	N/A ^(a)	N/A ^(a)	N/A ^(a)
	The EPA's satisfaction with the Department's provision of environmental management services during the year	73	85	92	7 ↑
6. Outcome: Compliance with Ministerial statement implementation conditions are monitored effectively:	The number of Ministerial statements audited compared to targets	23	100	68	-32 ↓

(a) The Treasurer has approved an exemption from reporting this indicator for 2024-25, 2025-26 and 2026-27

Summary of key efficiency indicators

Service		Key efficiency indicators	2023–24 Actual	Target	2024–25 Actual	Variance	
Service 1	Water Information and Advice	Proportion of Statutory Referrals from Decision Making Authorities Where Advice is Provided within Target Timeframes	92%	95%	94%	-1%	⬇️
		Average Cost per Referral Assessment	\$4,259	\$6,641	\$5,182	-1,459	⬆️
		Average Cost per Water Measurement Site Managed	\$8,285	\$7,419	\$8,107	688	⬇️
Service 2	Water Planning, Allocation and Optimisation	Average Cost per Plan, Report or Guidance Document to Support Water Planning, Allocation and Optimisation	\$194,137	\$321,012	\$259,057	-61,955	⬆️
		Average Cost per Hour of Scientific Support for Water Planning, Allocation and Optimisation	\$199	\$214	\$218	4	⬇️
Service 3	Water Regulation, Licensing and Industry Governance	Average Cost of Assessing a Water Licence Application by Risk Assessment Category:					
		• Low risk	\$4,182	\$4,742	\$4,243	-499	⬆️
		• Medium risk	\$5,577	\$6,323	\$5,657	-666	⬆️
		• High risk	\$6,971	\$7,904	\$7,071	-833	⬆️
		Average Time Taken (Days) to Assess a Licence Application by Risk Assessment Category:					
		• Low risk	58	65	59	-6	⬆️
		• Medium risk	84	75	63	-12	⬆️
		• High risk	92	95	76	-19	⬆️
		Average Cost of Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement Action	\$344	\$487	\$475	-12	⬆️
Service 4	Environmental Regulation	Average Cost per Works Approval and Licence Application	\$77,628	\$76,556	\$69,499	-7,057	⬆️
		Average Cost per Native Vegetation Clearing Permit Application	\$38,428	\$49,695	\$38,442	-11,253	⬆️
Service 5	Water and Environment Policy	Average Cost per Hour of Policy Advice and Recommendations	\$325	\$432	\$334	-98	⬆️
Service 6	Waste Strategies	Cost of Landfill Levy Compliance as a Percentage of Landfill Levy Income Collected	1.55%	1.40%	1.19%	-0.21%	⬆️
Service 7	Environmental Impact Assessment Services to the EPA	Cost per Standardised Unit of Assessment Output	\$102,998	\$79,087	\$79,259	172	⬇️
Service 8	Environmental Management Services to the EPA	Cost per Standardised Unit of Environmental Management Services Output	\$53,172	\$48,827	\$47,570	-1,257	⬆️
Service 9	Compliance Monitoring Services to the Minister	Average cost per Environmental Audit Completed	\$336,373	\$76,663	\$112,958	36,295	⬇️

Our priorities

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

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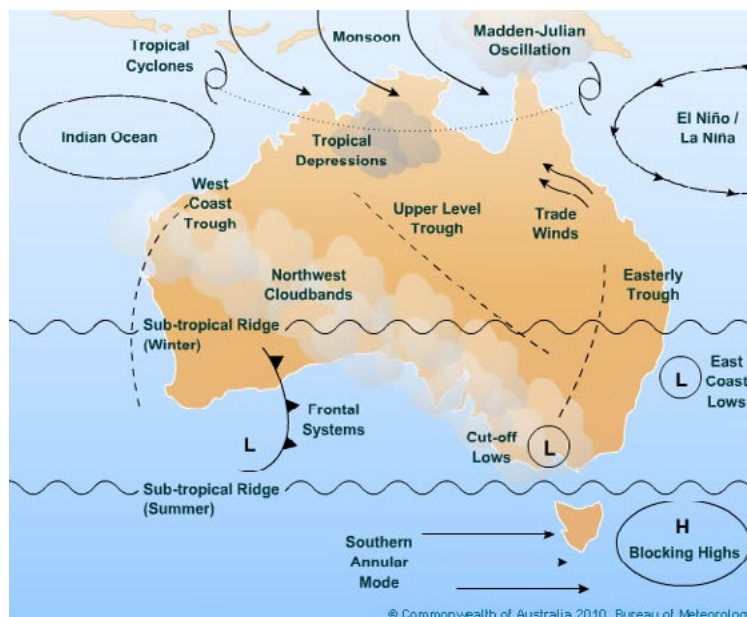
Climate response and resilience

New climate projections guide to strengthen water management

Our climate and water futures are linked. As an agency we have committed to put out the best and most robust climate data, not only to inform Western Australians but also to support efforts to adapt to climate change. Climate data is critical to inform water resource management. This year we published [a new guide for scientists, planners and decision-makers](#) on how to use up-to-date climate projections and approaches.

It is important for us to explain climate science in an accessible yet robust way – an approach which helps promote acceptance of our water and environmental management decisions. This in turn supports our climate risk management strategy.

Our climate data and related communications outputs boost confidence among our stakeholders and help government prepare industry and the community to adapt and respond to climate change impacts and risks. For more details see [Outcome 3](#).



Schematic of several key climate drivers and weather features of relevance for the Australian continent (BoM 2023)



Western Australia's climate is influenced by a range of climate drivers, with different regions experiencing various dominant influences. The observed drying trend in the state's south-west is projected to continue. For the rest of the state, projections for both wetter and drier rainfall futures are plausible. Temperature and potential evapotranspiration are projected to increase throughout the state. These increases will affect crop water demands and evaporation from waterbodies, including riverine pools and shallow groundwater. Increased temperatures may also directly affect vegetation and fire behaviour, which in turn will influence river flows and groundwater recharge. Western Australia is already experiencing the impacts of climate change. It has warmed by about 1.3°C since 1910 (DWER 2021).

Climate Resilience portfolio

In March the State Government set up a dedicated Climate Resilience ministerial portfolio to focus on the delivery of core initiatives to enhance the resilience of Western Australia's communities, environment and economy.

This Climate Resilience portfolio has begun overseeing implementation of the state's first Climate Adaptation Strategy (released in mid-2023), for which almost \$40 million has been allocated for delivery of 37 actions across 13 agencies and government trading enterprises. The Department is leading 17 of the actions.

2024–25 climate insights for Western Australia¹



Rising temperature

Mean maximum temperatures in 2024 were above, to very much above average for almost the whole state, with the highest on record along the west coast. Many coastal sites from Carnarvon down to Busselton had their warmest year on record.

Western Australia's area-averaged mean maximum temperature was 1.69°C above the 1961–1990 average, the second warmest on record for all years since 1910, behind the record set in 2019.



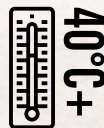
South-west drying trend

Rainfall totals in 2024 were below, to very much below average in the state's south-west.



Summer extreme flashpoint

In late December, low to severe-intensity heatwaves impacted much of Western Australia, with parts of the west coast and adjacent inland areas experiencing the most severe conditions. From the 21st to 23rd, daytime temperatures were 4 to 12°C above average and fire dangers were high to extreme for large parts of the state. Several sites had their highest-ever-recorded daily maximum temperature for December, including Murchison, which recorded 46.0°C on the 22nd (35 years of data) and Pearce RAAF, which recorded 44.7°C on the 23rd (65 years of data). Several sites also had two to three consecutive days of maximum temperatures above 45°C between the 21st and 23rd, including Morawa (two days) and Mullewa and Murchison (three days).



Autumn 2025

Many sites in the South West Land Division had their warmest autumn on record. Low to severe-intensity heatwaves were observed across the north, central and south west in early March, with maximum temperatures reaching the 40s and minimum temperatures remaining in the low 30s. Several sites had their highest ever recorded daily maximum or daily minimum temperature.

¹ Source BoM 2025

Indian Ocean Territories on the climate frontline

Cocos Islands coastal hazards map and adaptation plan

We manage environmental and water resources in the Indian Ocean Territories (IOT) on behalf of the Commonwealth which has a service delivery agreement with the Department. The agreement ensures that Territory communities receive services comparable to those on the mainland. We currently conduct over 40 environment and water-based services, with a focus on contemporising integrated land and water planning proposals.

Climate change on atoll communities is being felt across the world due to rising sea levels. We have been supporting the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH) on water governance measures relating to its [draft Cocos Islands coastal hazards map and adaption plan](#) for the

Cocos-Keeling Islands. Work on this plan outlines scenarios and recommendations concerning climate change threats over a 50 year horizon to the continued inhabitation of the island's communities.

The Department is in consultation with the Cocos-Keeling Islands community and DPLH to ensure appropriate decision-making over the coming years for the strategic planning options outlined in the plan concerning flood, wave overtopping and sea level rise.

Our environmental and water assessments, informed by climate change projections, provide the science underpinning the proposed regulatory planning framework to protect the Cocos-Keeling Islands.

Read more about the services we deliver to the [IOT](#).



Local project collaboration advances modelling of urban heat effect

The Government of Western Australia's 2023 climate adaptation funding included modelling of the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect in the Perth metropolitan area to inform future planning and adaptation strategies.

The three-year project involves complex atmospheric modelling running the [Weather Research and Forecasting \(WRF\) model on supercomputers](#). Future climate projections developed by the [WA Climate Science Initiative](#) will also be used as input for this project. The project also includes mobile and stationary environmental monitoring, as well as assessment of air quality changes in a changing climate.

Urban heat threatens health, and its impacts will increase in future. Producing high-resolution heat maps to support all levels of government in heat mitigation efforts will help keep people safe and well.

This year our Urban Heat Island Project procured specialised landcover and urban morphology datasets, with additional data provided by local project collaborators. We conducted simulations for the WRF model using the Pawsey supercomputer. We also created high-resolution urban descriptive input data for urban heat island modelling using high-resolution landcover and building morphology datasets.

Gabi Warlang Bidi water quality improvement plan

The Bindjareb Djilba (Peel Harvey Estuary) is south-west Western Australia's largest and most diverse estuary, yet it suffers from eutrophication, algal blooms, low oxygen levels and related fish kills.

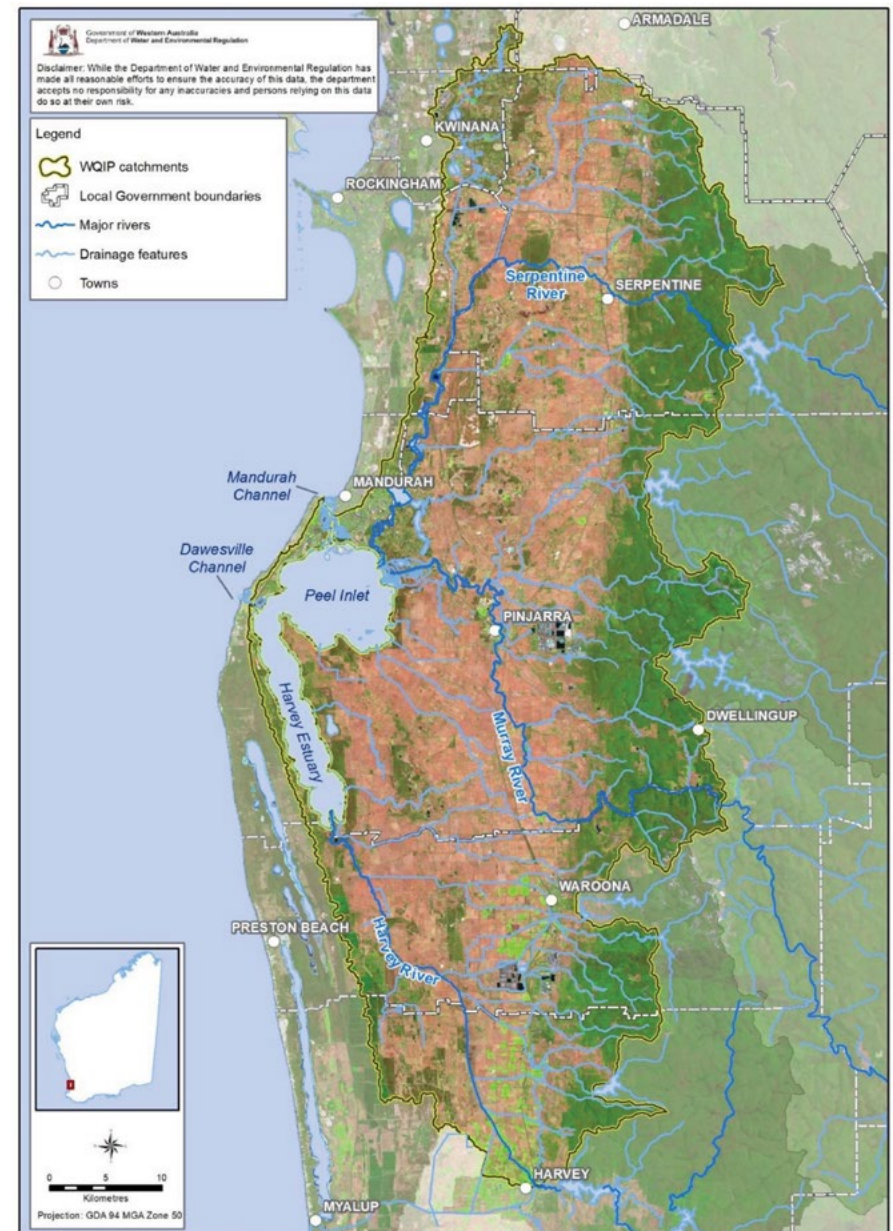
Strengthening protection of the estuary system is a key government commitment.

The new water quality improvement plan (WQIP) released this year prioritises a reduction in nutrient inputs to improve water quality and resilience in a drying climate.

The WQIP supports the Bindjareb Djilba Protection Plan by providing more detail about water quality issues and robust scientific evidence, including modelling, to support the protection plan's management goals and actions. This builds on complementary initiatives, namely the Regional Estuaries Initiative (2016–20) and Healthy Estuaries WA (2020–present).



The snowy white *Ardea alba* (great egret) is found wading in the shallow waters of the Peel-Harvey estuary and lakes, feeding mainly on fish and other small aquatic animals (Hale and Butcher 2007)



The Peel-Harvey estuary coastal plain catchment (plan area)

Seawater – managing climate risk to our freshwater resources

As the climate changes, and both sea and inland water levels change in response, managing the interface between saltwater and freshwater bodies is crucial for water source protection, ecosystem health and liveability.

Our State Groundwater Investigation Program is delivering high-quality data and mapping to mitigate [saltwater intrusion risks along Western Australia's coastline](#). These investigations are critical to ensuring long-term water security for local communities and industries that depend on groundwater, and will underpin better water planning and licensing decisions.

In Esperance, where the Superficial aquifer is the sole source of drinking water, our groundwater science experts completed a detailed study of saltwater movement. The study was supported by new monitoring bores and spatial maps showing where salinity is increasing and where management action may be needed. The findings will guide sustainable groundwater use and help the community manage risks from climate change and increased water demand.

This work is about staying one step ahead – ensuring that Western Australians can continue to rely on high-quality groundwater even as conditions change.

Rural water crisis response – supporting our farming communities

Drought is an enduring feature in many parts of the state, particularly in the dryland farming communities.

During the year, the Department supported three communities experiencing severe water deficiencies in the Shire of Esperance. We carted water to Salmon Gums, Grasspatch and Cascades using water from the Esperance town water supply scheme.

The government through the Department approved more than \$4.8 million in emergency water supplies and community water projects in dryland areas during 2024–25, including \$2.2 million for 38 projects under National Water Grid Connections, National Water Grid WISER and the Community Water Supplies Partnerships program expansion; and \$2.1 million for Agricultural Areas emergency dams.

Together with the Australian Government, the State Government is further supporting these and other dryland farming communities and towns by investing in climate resilient water infrastructure projects.

The Community Water Supply Partnerships program has been funded \$5.6 million from 2024–25 to 2026–27, and its approval processes have been streamlined for projects under \$100,000 so that communities can respond faster to local needs for climate adaptation. These funds support infrastructure like bores, tanks, and capture and distribution for community supplies used for firefighting, irrigating public spaces, or reducing pressure on scheme water.



AA dams Shire of Westonia Warralackin Tank Upgrades

Technology and environmental management

Counting app streamlines critical data collection

Passion and perseverance have driven the Department's Phytoplankton Ecology Unit to revolutionise data recording in sample analysis. A new app has replaced paper-based processes, enabling staff to transfer data directly to our databases – thus eliminating manual calculations.

Our Aquatic Science specialists spearheaded the app project, which included obtaining crucial

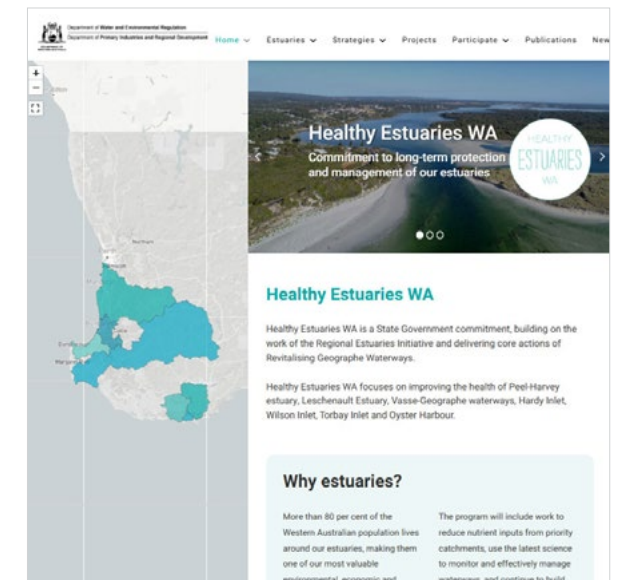
end-user feedback from the Department's phytoplankton taxonomists and information services specialists – highlighting the power of cross-team innovation with excellent outcomes for our business.

Phytoplankton, which are microscopic organisms crucial to aquatic ecosystems, support the food chain, remove carbon dioxide, and oxygenate

water. However, excessive growth can harm water quality and aquatic life. The Phytoplankton Ecology Unit oversees the statewide phytoplankton response, monitoring key waterways through programs like Healthy Estuaries WA and the Bindjareb Djilba Protection Plan. It also advises government agencies on public health and ecological risks, including fish deaths and algal blooms.



Shaojun Lin, Kaylee Giannopoulos, Amanda Charles working in the lab



Upgrading our hi-tech groundwater modelling

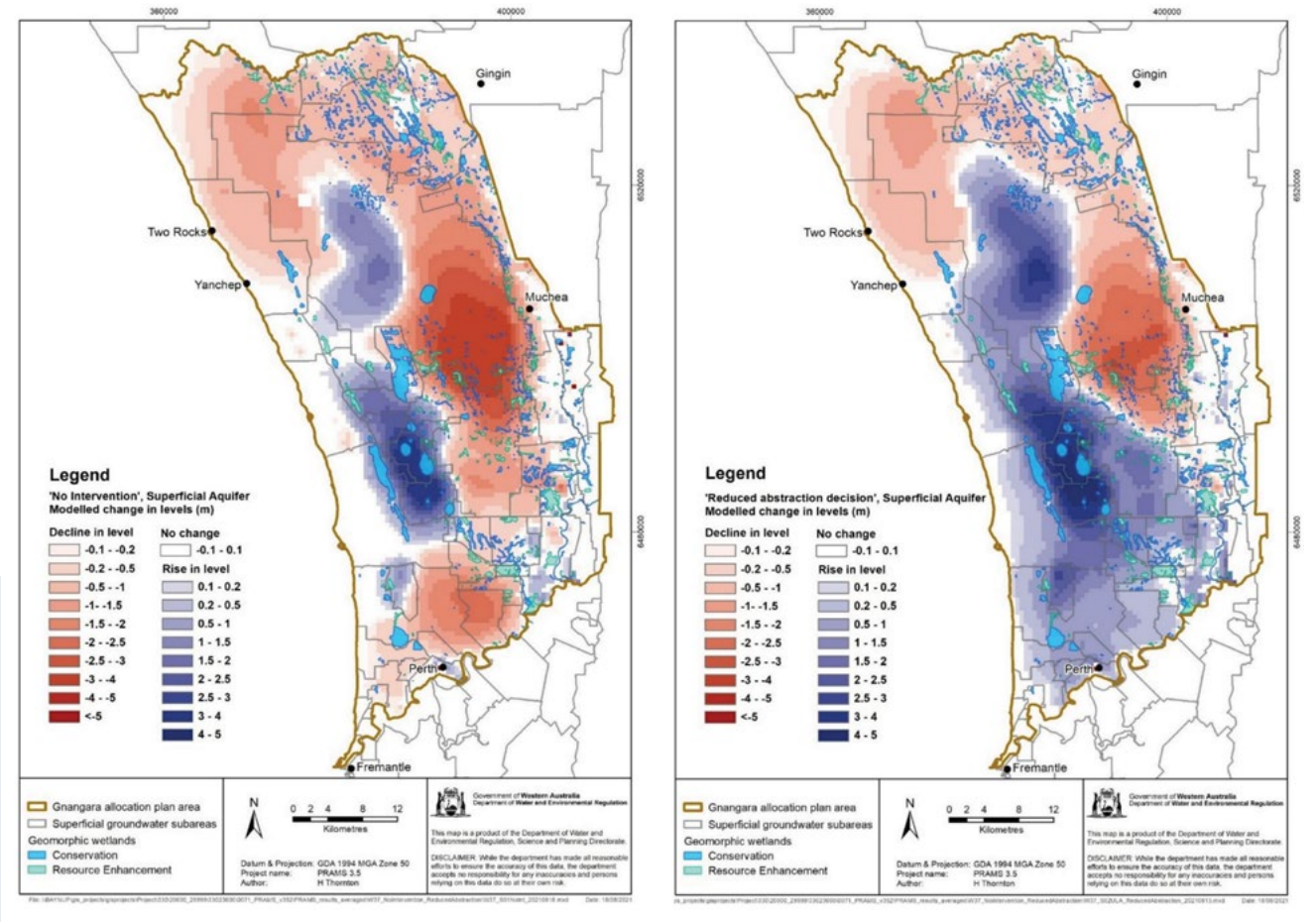
The Department’s success with managing complex hydrogeological systems is predicated on our ability to make reliable predictions about future system behaviour. We use groundwater models primarily to inform water supply and allocation planning decisions. Of particular note is the Perth Regional Aquifer Modelling System (PRAMS) – a joint effort between the Department and Water Corporation – which simulates Perth’s two major water resources: the Gngangara and Jandakot groundwater systems.

Groundwater is a key resource for the Perth region where it provides water for drinking, irrigating gardens and recreational spaces, horticulture and industry. The PRAMS model domain extends as far north as Cervantes and south to Mandurah.

Sustainable water use in the context of a changing climate remains at the core of the planning process. Following release of the Gngangara groundwater allocation plan and in line with Action 20 in the *Kep Katitjin – Gabi Kaadadjan – Waterwise Perth Action Plan 2* and and Action 26 of *Kep Katitjin – Gabi Kaadadjan – Waterwise Perth Action 3 (2024–27)*, we committed to reviewing allocation limits in the Jandakot and Perth South groundwater areas.

So that the PRAMS modelling platform could continue to remain suitable for decision support across Perth’s groundwater systems, in July we performed ‘history matching’ to create an updated version of the model to become PRAMS version 3.6.

Advanced modelling is critical for reliable predictions of future system behaviour to adapt to climate change.



WAVE – Cumulative impact and assessment technology and the environment

The past decade has seen significant advances in artificial intelligence (AI). Under the [Native Vegetation Policy](#), the State Government is delivering a vegetation extent mapping system for Western Australia (WAVE) pilot using AI, to see if new technological advances can be used to track losses of and gains in this critical state asset.

The government has committed \$3.3 million over three years to the WAVE pilot project. This year the Department continued to customise the latest vegetation mapping technologies to our state's unique data settings and establish bespoke machine learning.

If successful, WAVE will inform the decision-making of government agencies and improve their regulatory decisions, as well as their ability to track environmental impacts and support conservation initiatives. Industries such as mining, agriculture, and urban development will have a reliable resource to guide land use planning, compliance, and sustainability efforts.

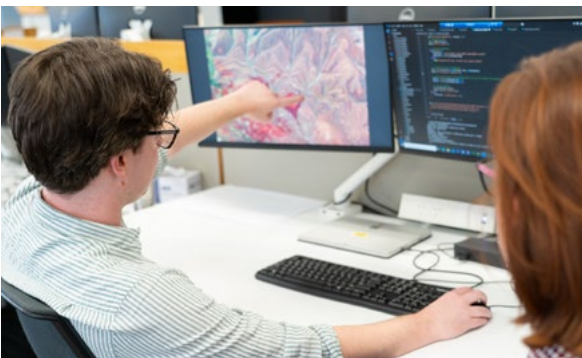


Nyamal Ranger Adrian Taylor talking about survey site placement with TERN field staff Michael Starkey in the jointly-managed Purungunya Conservation Estate. Photo Donna Lewis (TERN Australia)

WAVE is a crucial step toward harnessing technology to achieve a net gain in native vegetation and achieving the state's broader environmental strategies through the Native Vegetation Policy. At the end of the pilot, we will make recommendations on the accuracy and future use of the technology.

Pilot features:

- responds to lack of off-the-shelf solution for our state's unique flora and landscape
- utilises developments in satellite mapping technology and adds AI to support Western Australian conditions
- deploys machine learning for recognition of unique species as objects for meaningful analysis, as well as for site surveys and image capture.



WAVE staff working on Pilbara datasets using collected field data



TERN staff Lisa Wood undertaking comprehensive flora survey in new ecosystem surveillance plots on Muntulgura Guruma country Photo: Kirrily Blaycock (TERN Australia)



Bobtail lizard (*Tiliqua rugosa*) Dandaragan Plateau, Swan Coastal Plain. Photo: Carolyn Martin, WAVE program manager

Sustainability and diversification

Reforming environmental approvals

In October the Western Australian Parliament passed the *Environmental Protection Amendment Act 2024*, formalising significant reforms to the state's environmental approval laws in line with the Vogel-McFerran review's recommendations.

The approvals reforms have been designed to accelerate major job-creating projects, while maintaining Western Australia's world-class environmental standards.

Under the new legislation, other government regulators can process and issue their own approvals, parallel to Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) assessments, improving timeframes and providing more certainty for industry.

The laws provide a new mechanism for the EPA to factor government priorities into its operations – through a Statement of Expectation from the Minister for the Environment.



Over 85 per cent of the [Vogel-McFerran review recommendations](#) were completed by 30 June 2025. Recommendations related to social surroundings have been superseded by a [Native Title and an Aboriginal cultural heritage targeted review](#), announced by Government on 30 May 2025.

A further seven per cent of recommendations were noted by Government, with three per cent expected to be completed by December 2025. Remaining recommendations under

DWER responsibility are subject to Commonwealth negotiations.

Some recommendations actioned by DWER include:

- opening a central business district office hub for the EPA
- introducing a renewed graduate program, recruitment strategy and mentoring program
- exempting a range of amendments to regional and local planning schemes from automatic referral to the EPA.

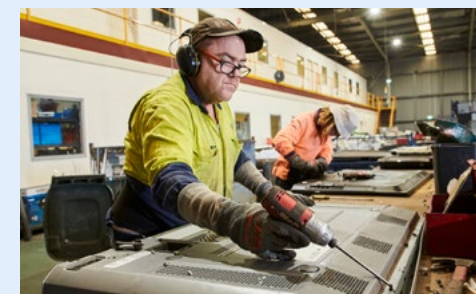
The Minister for the Environment's first Statement of Expectation highlights several government focus areas for the EPA to prioritise in its operations, including:

- housing supply and expansion of the softwood plantation estate for the construction industry
- critical minerals, hydrogen and downstream processing projects for diversifying the state's economy
- transmission infrastructure and other projects to drive the renewable energy transition and Collie's Just Transition
- job-creating projects to support the state's economic development.

The statement also included some future government major projects as important matters for the EPA to consider, including the delivery of Westport – the state's next seawater desalination plant in Alkimos – and the new public Women and Babies Hospital.

► Resourcing the reforms

The government has allocated \$14 million to boost staffing of the EPA and the Office of the Appeals Convenor to clear existing backlogs, enabling faster decisions without impacting environmental protection standards.



Job-creating projects to support the state's economic development and sustainability

Decarbonisation

In March the State Government created the Energy and Decarbonisation ministerial portfolio to focus on the integration of net zero emissions and energy sector reform.

The portfolio will support the government's ambitions for Western Australia to become a clean energy powerhouse, leveraging new legislative and machinery-of-government reforms to accelerate hydrogen hubs, green iron and steel, and electricity generation using wind and solar resources.

This portfolio is planning for common-use transmission infrastructure in the emissions-intensive Pilbara, investments in breakthroughs on initiatives like carbon capture and storage, and moving the South West power grid away from coal-fired power.



Moora Microgrid turbine transport. Photo courtesy Advanced Energy Resources

Driving clean energy innovation

The Department approved \$16 million in grants across seven new projects during the year under the [Clean Energy Future Fund](#) (CEFF).

These projects included hydrogen production, battery storage, a pilot converting diesel mining vehicles to electric power, and an all-electric retirement home.

Of the total funding, \$8.5 million will support three initiatives led by First Nations organisations: the Banjima Native Title Aboriginal Corporation, the Jinparinya Aboriginal Community and Electric Power Conversions Australia.

When complete, we estimate all the funded projects will lead to a reduction of 175,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases each year – or the equivalent of removing 56,000 petroleum vehicles off the road.

We administer the Clean Energy Future Fund with support from Energy Policy WA and the Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety.



The Department's officer Ro Richardson inspecting the Ambrisolar solar grid installation and upgrade



Carosue Dam Nomadic Energy

Green energy

Established in 2023 to support the cross-government [Green Energy Approvals Initiative](#) and deliver green energy solutions for Western Australia, the Green Energy directorate has seen a steady and sustained increase in demand for assessments of green energy proposals (renewable energy and critical minerals).

We are continuing to work collaboratively with other State Government agencies to develop clear assessment pathways and provide high-quality, timely support for proponents and investors, while finding solutions for any emerging regulatory issues.

Since the Green Energy directorate was established, we have finalised more than 70 environmental referrals and/or assessments for renewable energy projects under Part IV and Part V of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (EP Act) including:

- Eleven solar projects, such as the Turner River Solar Hub, Broome Future Energy System, Yindjibarndi Jinbi Solar Project #1 and Kimberley Future Energy System.
- Five wind projects, including three National Renewable Energy Priority projects: Parron Wind Farm, Waddi Wind Farm, and Narrogin Wind Farm.
- Five electricity transmission projects.

We have also delivered key environmental approvals for critical mineral projects, including assessments for lithium projects such as Greenbushes Lithium Project, Albemarle Kemerton Plant, and Covalent Lithium Hydroxide Refinery operations, as well as nickel and tantalum projects.

We are currently assessing or regulating more than 50 green energy projects and proposals, including the Hastings Yangibana Expansion, Western Green Energy Hub, and Chalice Mining’s Gonneville Nickel-Copper-Platinum Group Element project. More than 30 proposals are expected to be referred for assessment in the coming year.



AER Moora microgrid project

Circular economy priorities

Waste management and resource recovery are dynamic areas and government priorities are evolving to meet environmental needs and community expectations.

Our approach to waste acknowledges the need for a more circular economy.

Programs like [Containers for Change](#), [Plan for Plastics](#) and [FOGO](#) (food and garden organics) are making real differences to the way we handle waste and recycling to support the circular economy.

A successful circular economy relies on government and businesses working together to identify and take advantage of opportunities to invest and produce jobs across communities – including in regional Western Australia.

Our state waste infrastructure plan identifies infrastructure needs to deliver on waste management and recycling objectives for the future.

Our teams are working on a recovered materials framework which supports industry with the certainty they need to invest in turning waste into commercial products, such as using construction waste to make road base.



Reducing household waste and reclaiming organics

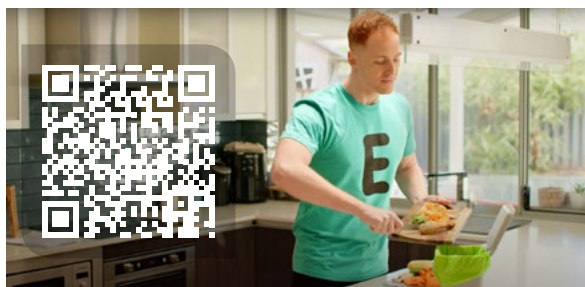
Three-bin collection systems which include food and garden organics (FOGO) are a key component of the State Government's ambitions to build a low-waste circular economy through the [Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy 2030](#).

Separating FOGO from other waste categories gives local governments the opportunity to turn household waste into high-quality compost and soil products for agriculture, landscaping and public open spaces.

The [Better Bins Plus: Go FOGO](#) program, run by the Waste Authority, part funds and helps councils transition to the three-bin system.

In June the government announced the City of Rockingham as the 25th local government in Western Australia to begin FOGO collection. More than 57,000 households in Rockingham now have access to a three-bin FOGO service.

The rollout of FOGO in Rockingham marks a major milestone in Western Australia's push to reduce landfill and lift recycling rates.



WasteSorted: [Transform your kitchen scraps and garden waste](#) campaign video

Thirst for container change grows

The popular Containers for Change program is an example of well-designed product stewardship involving businesses, community and the waste industry.

The program has seen the collection of 4.25 billion containers for recycling; \$15 million raised across 8,000 charities, community groups and schools; and the creation of 900 jobs.

Before Containers for Change, only 32 per cent of eligible beverage containers were being recycled – this has now increased to 65 per cent. Drinks containers were around 12 per cent of all litter, but are now less than 4 per cent.

In 2025, the State Government made a commitment to expand the container deposit scheme to include wine and spirit bottles.

The Department has consulted widely with all relevant stakeholders, including the beverage industry, and is working on minimising costs and administrative burdens (which will ultimately benefit consumers). We are working with all other states and territories to make it easier for beverage suppliers to participate across jurisdictions through a national portal.



Progress on problem plastics

The [Plan for Plastics](#) was introduced in 2020 and provides a roadmap towards a more sustainable, plastic and litter-free Western Australia. The plan introduced regulations to ban more than 20 single-use plastic items, preventing hundreds of millions of such items becoming litter or contributing to landfill every year.

Single-use plastic products may be convenient but their impacts on the environment, waste management facilities and human health cannot be ignored.

The Plan for Plastics has garnered strong community and industry support to maintain progress and address the environmental issues and health impacts presented by plastics.



During the year, single-use takeaway food container lids and loose produce bags became the latest products to be replaced by compostable, environmentally-friendly alternatives.

Items already banned under the plan include plastic takeaway coffee cups, microbeads, polystyrene cups, cotton buds with plastic stems, and loose-fill polystyrene packaging.

The latest bans will save up to an additional 226 million single-use plastics from becoming landfill and litter each year.

Households with access to the three-bin FOGO system can compost their compliant produce bags, including using them as a kitchen caddy liner.

Businesses have been given transition periods to work through the changes. The National Retail Association and the Boomerang Alliance will continue to support businesses throughout the transition, including through the WA Plastic Free Places program and the [Plastic Ban Solution Finder tool](#).

Lithium battery fires

The rapid proliferation of lithium-ion batteries in consumer goods presents a critical threat to the waste and resource recovery sector. When incorrectly placed in kerbside bins, these batteries can be crushed, triggering intense fires in collection trucks and facilities. These incidents cause pollution, create a grave and direct risk to worker safety, damage essential infrastructure, and jeopardise the viability of recycling operations. Addressing this growing hazard is a key priority for the Waste Authority.

More than \$6 million has already been invested in prevention through the [E-Waste Infrastructure Grants](#) and the 'Never Bin a Battery' campaign. The latter, which includes two videos interviewing waste workers who responded to fires, has been amplified by local governments and the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA). Opportunities for further action are being considered.



WasteSorted: [Never Bin a Battery](#) campaign video



Customer service and engagement

Integrating our online environment

[Environment Online](#) is a digital platform that provides a single access point for regulatory activities, automated case management and integrated data management. It continues to evolve as a key enabler of the State Government’s environmental approvals reform in Western Australia.

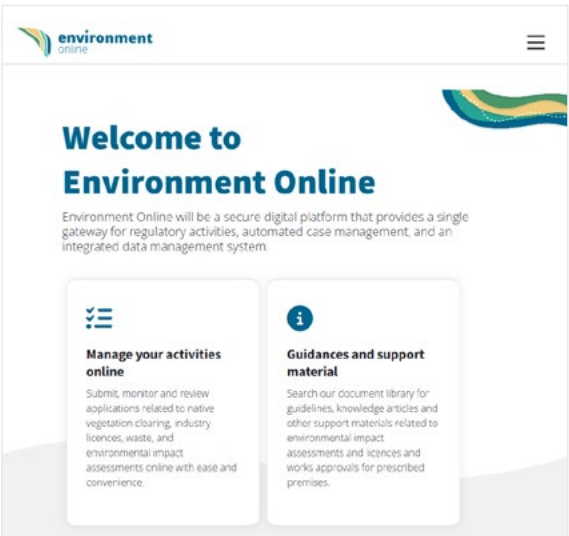
During the year, foundational functionality was introduced to support industry regulation services. This includes the ability for customers to apply for licences, works approvals and registrations; submit annual licence fee information; and lodge compliance plans and reports. These capabilities lay the groundwork for the full integration of industry regulation services into Environment Online, creating a more flexible and responsive system that can adapt to future legislative and regulatory changes.



Environment Online team celebrating integrated payments going live

Additional enhancements delivered during the year include an integrated payment solution for environmental impact assessment proposals and a new login option to improve accessibility for individual users.

Current development work is focused on transitioning Water Online and existing industry regulation systems into Environment Online, as well as introducing planning advice referrals to the platform.

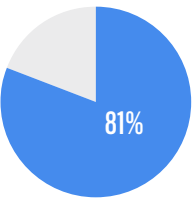


Stakeholder insights and engagement

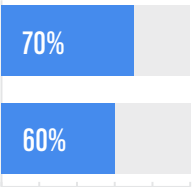
Each year we engage our key stakeholders, customers and the community to gain insights into, and feedback on our performance.

To align with our new portfolio operating model, this year we made changes to the survey methodology, which recorded results against five pillars: water, environment, waste, approvals, and climate change and sustainability.

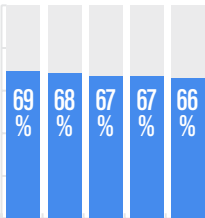
Some findings from this year’s key stakeholder research are:



81 per cent of stakeholders feel their interactions with us are equal to, or better than their interactions with other government organisations.



70 per cent of stakeholders find it easy to engage with us, compared with 60 per cent of customers. Even though there were some differences between groups, the majority found it was straightforward to engage with us.



Stakeholders reported consistent experiences across all five pillars, with climate change and sustainability (69 per cent), waste (68 per cent), water (67 per cent), approvals (67 per cent) and environment (66 per cent) showing similarly positive experiences.

These results suggest that, overall, stakeholders feel positive about their dealings with the Department.

Feedback on how we are managing the state's water resources is being addressed through ongoing reform and operational improvements.

Read about how we are responding to [water compliance and security](#).

Our research includes people with a disability, people caring for someone with a disability, people who live in all regions of Western Australia, people of various income levels (from less than \$31,199 to those with incomes of \$208,000 or more), people of non-binary gender, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and people from various specific industry groups such as those working in mining, conservation, government, water, heavy industry, climate change, academia, environment, and business.

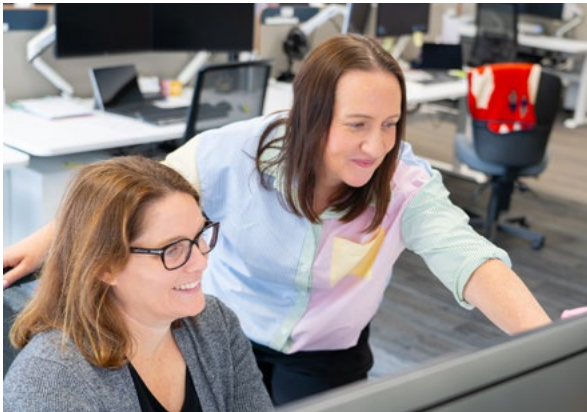
This makes sure views of stakeholders, customers and the community are considered in our work, policy development and our strategic planning.

Central resource for customer service

We have launched a new Customers First portal as a central resource for our staff to access customer service information and support materials.

Grounded in the Department's values, the portal provides quick and easy access to key resources including our customer service charter, training materials, stakeholder engagement guidance, and annual research findings.

As part of our commitment to putting stakeholders, customers and the community at the heart of everything we do, the portal supports staff to deliver services that reflect what people want, need and expect.



Bec O'Leary, Assistant Director, Stakeholder Engagement and Renee Hazeldine, Graphic Designer working on the Customers First Portal

New statewide directorate delivering for the regions

Statewide Delivery (SWD) is now our largest directorate and sits within the Approvals portfolio. With over 340 staff across the state, SWD provides a significant portion of our regional footprint.

SWD processes about 70 per cent of the Department's water and environmental approvals, provides planning advice, leads strategic programs, and undertakes surface and groundwater water measurement and monitoring across the state. SWD also supports stakeholder engagement and contentious issues management.

Between July 2024 and March 2025, SWD underwent organisational reform as part of the introduction of the Department's Portfolio Operating Model. The reform process amalgamated the previous regulatory services and regional delivery directorates to create a more 'joined-up approach'. The result will be better decision-making and advice across water and environment approvals, and improved statewide connectivity and intelligence for proactive risk management and service delivery.

Since March 2025, areas of focus have been to support staff through change, develop leadership and capacity, create a statewide water measurement program, establish a new Heavy Industries Branch, and develop processes to improve service delivery and stakeholder engagement.

Capacity, community and Closing the Gap

Albany community helps name locally built monitoring vessel

A new boat built in Albany (Kinjarling) will replace the 35-year-old vessel that had supported water quality monitoring in South Coast waterways since the early 90s.

The vessel's design was a collaboration between the Aquatic Science Branch's Healthy Estuaries WA and the South Coast regional office. The boat was constructed in Albany, drawing on local expertise and supporting regional businesses.

Monitoring water quality is an important part of protecting our estuaries. The new boat will help to ensure the data gathered is as accurate as possible and better protect the safety of our monitoring officers (who are often on the water in less-than-ideal conditions).

From the 49 proposed names submitted, our staff drew up a shortlist of four. More than 200 people then voted on this final four to select the winner.

The name was revealed at a launch event in Albany in July, attended by the then member for Albany, Rebecca Stephens MLA; the Executive Director of Statewide Delivery, Liam O'Connell; Menang Elders Lester and Harley Coyne; and various internal and external stakeholders.

An 11-year-old from Denmark, Leeuwin Ossinger, submitted the winning name 'Paarndi' – a Menang Noongar word meaning Black Bream. Leeuwin will be invited to join scientific officers on a monitoring trip in the new boat to one of the South Coast estuaries.

Annual Ord stakeholder forum

The Ord continues to be a major source of water with significance for the state and Kimberley region – supporting agriculture and electricity generation, as well as deep cultural values for Traditional Owners of the Miriwoong Country.

Each year our North West team hosts a gathering of stakeholders with an interest in the Ord's management. At the forum our team reports to the community, irrigators and industry on the status of the water supply and whether any irrigation restrictions are forecast in upcoming years. It is also an opportunity to connect with the community on other developments in the Ord and discuss work that different groups have been progressing.

Early this year the Annual Ord Stakeholder Forum was held in the Ord Irrigation Cooperative (OIC) shed in Kununurra, in partnership with the OIC and Water Corporation.

The forum heard that Lake Argyle dam is at capacity and running over the spillway, which removes the possibility of restrictions for the next two years. Ord Irrigation Cooperative efficiency work was also discussed.



Menang Elder Harley Coyne endorses the vessel and name



Rebecca Stephens MLA and Leeuwin Ossinger unveil the new boat's name



Regional Director North West Susie Williams talking at the Ord stakeholder gathering

Legacy of the Gascoyne

In partnership with Gwoonwardu Mia, we commissioned a canvas painting to represent the Gascoyne region as a sign of our respect and commitment to include First Nations perspectives in our work.

Gwoonwardu Mia is a multipurpose cultural centre, hosted on Yinggarda Country in Carnarvon, which celebrates and recognises the five Aboriginal language groups of the Gascoyne.

After developing a transparent process and selection criteria, the team at Gwoonwardu Mia accepted applications from various Aboriginal artists in the region. A committee of representatives then decided on its preferred applicant – Gabrielle Barney from Carnarvon. Gabrielle is from the Yinggarda clan, a heritage that deeply influences her artistic expression and storytelling. She has been passionately creating art that reflects her rich cultural heritage and personal experiences for 15 years.

Gwoonwardu Mia hosted a morning tea to unveil the painting, which is now proudly displayed in our Carnarvon office along with the story behind the painting and the artist's profile.



Barry Belotti (Gwoonwardu Mia), Sheila Trevisan (Regional Director MWG), Gabrielle Barney (artist)

Yamatji water measurement trainee success

Through the water components of the [Yamatji Indigenous Land Use Agreement](#) (ILUA) native title settlement, we are training Yamatji people in techniques to take water measurements and manage water. With our Geraldton office hosting two trainees, the training program includes work experience, as well as on-the-job and TAFE training.

During the visit, the trainees observed how seismic surveying works and learned more about how this technology is being used to explore what is beneath the earth's surface.

Site visits on Yamatji Country in the Mid West Region form a large part of the training. In February, the trainees went out to Strike Energy's Natta 3D Seismic Survey site in the Shire of Three Springs. During the visit, the trainees observed how seismic surveying works and learned more about how this technology is being used to explore what is beneath the earth's surface.

Seismic surveys are a feature of resource exploration on Yamatji Country – allowing geological mapping without drilling or digging. Seeing this blend of advanced technology and environmental care gave the team plenty to consider for their own work in water management and natural resource conservation.



Cadence Gordon (trainee), Sharon Oxenham (Senior Aboriginal Liaison Officer), Vilma Hodder (trainee), Lyric Papertalk (Natural Resource Management Officer)

SALT supporting transformational change

We are proud to introduce our new Senior Aboriginal Leadership Team (SALT), a strategic group providing Aboriginal leadership across all Department portfolios. SALT plays a key role in embedding Aboriginal empowerment into our core business and strengthening how we work with Aboriginal people and communities.

SALT includes:

- Jillian Collard, Senior Manager Aboriginal Engagement and Partnerships (Strategy and Performance).
- Deanne Fitzgerald, Senior Aboriginal Advisor (Climate and Sustainability).
- Marissa Hastings, Senior Aboriginal Advisor (Approvals).

This unique and interconnected leadership model reflects Aboriginal ways of working, and marks a shift from transactional approaches to transformational change. SALT's focus has been leading a strategic uplift towards embedding Aboriginal empowerment into DWER's operations by complementing the expertise of business units and aligning the Department's work with key whole-of-government drivers, including the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) (National Agreement) and WA [Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy](#).



Our Senior Aboriginal Leadership Team: Jillian Collard, Deanne Fitzgerald and Marissa Hastings

Graduates on the ground

A large part of our reform agenda has been to recruit and develop staff to meet our contemporary human resource needs – our graduate program is an important part of this.

Through this program we have sought to encourage an appreciation of the diverse regions we work in throughout Western Australia.

This year our graduate officers – Brianne Robinson-Ellis, Rebecca Wei, Rachel Padden, Luci Holmes and Sharlene Baloch – joined an inter-agency trip to the Mid West region as part of their development program.

Marking the first year of our involvement, the excursion gave the new officers an opportunity to see the Department's regional work firsthand.

They joined graduates and leaders from the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation and Department of Treasury.

Among the many highlights were site visits to the Warradarge Wind Farm, APA Mondarra Gas Storage Facility, and the Kalbarri Skywalk.

The graduates shared their learnings and insights with the Corporate Executive, with everyone agreeing the activity was valuable and worthy of inclusion in future graduate programs.



Valuable insights and learnings for our graduates in the Mid West

Aboriginal empowerment

Over the past year, the Department has continued to embed Aboriginal worldviews and decision-making into our core business, supporting the social, cultural and economic aspirations of Aboriginal people across Western Australia.

Through the Aboriginal Engagement and Partnerships (AEP) Branch, the Department continued to build strong, respectful relationships with Aboriginal communities across the state. The branch supported co-designed initiatives and maintained ongoing dialogue to ensure our services reflect the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people.

The Department has continued to advance key actions aligned with the National Agreement and the Western Australian Government’s Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy (AES), delivering tangible outcomes across governance, engagement, training, and cultural capability.

The final report for the Department’s Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) was also completed this year, documenting achievements and lessons learned, and informing the development of future reconciliation initiatives. The Department is now transitioning to a 10-year Roadmap aligned with the National Agreement and AES, embedding reconciliation and Aboriginal empowerment into core operations.

The Department has strengthened internal governance to ensure Aboriginal voices shape the Department’s strategic direction. The Aboriginal Empowerment Board (AEB), provided strategic oversight of initiatives that impact Aboriginal people and communities. The AEB met quarterly during the year, progressing key actions under the RAP, and overseeing the alignment of departmental initiatives with national and state Aboriginal affairs strategies.

The Aboriginal Water and Environment Advisory Group (AWEAG), our independent Aboriginal advisory body, met four times over the year. AWEAG provided strategic advice on:

- The Murujuga Rock Art Monitoring program.
- Traditional Owner engagement in the Pilbara.
- Climate adaptation planning in the Kimberley.
- Inland Water Target work (National Agreement).
- First Nations Climate Resilience Project.
- Contribution to the National Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Water Interests (CAWI).

This cross-portfolio engagement ensured Aboriginal values, knowledge systems and aspirations were embedded in the Department’s environmental and water programs.



Corporate and strategic priorities and success

Best-practice cyber security

The Department was highlighted in the recent State Government [Information Systems Audit](#) as being one of only five agencies who had consistently met their expectations since 2021–22.

Conducted by the [Office of the Auditor General](#) as part of its any financial audit program, the Information Systems Audit considers the capability maturity level of government entities to manage risks to the confidentiality, integrity and availability of their systems and information.



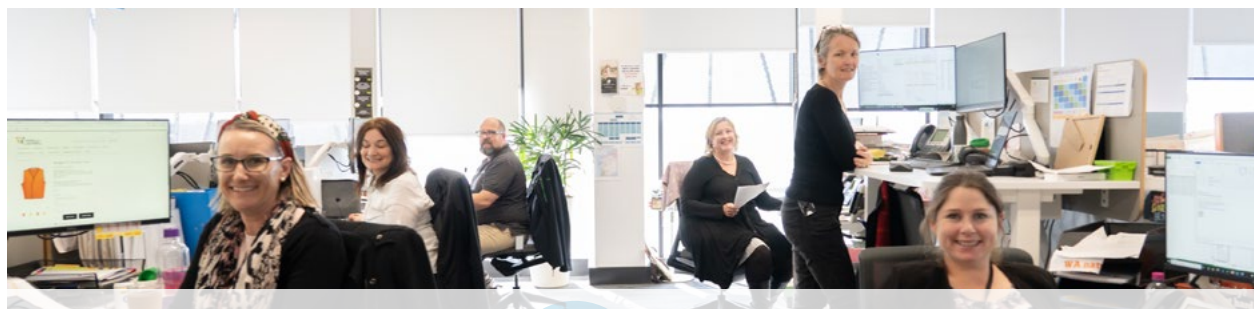
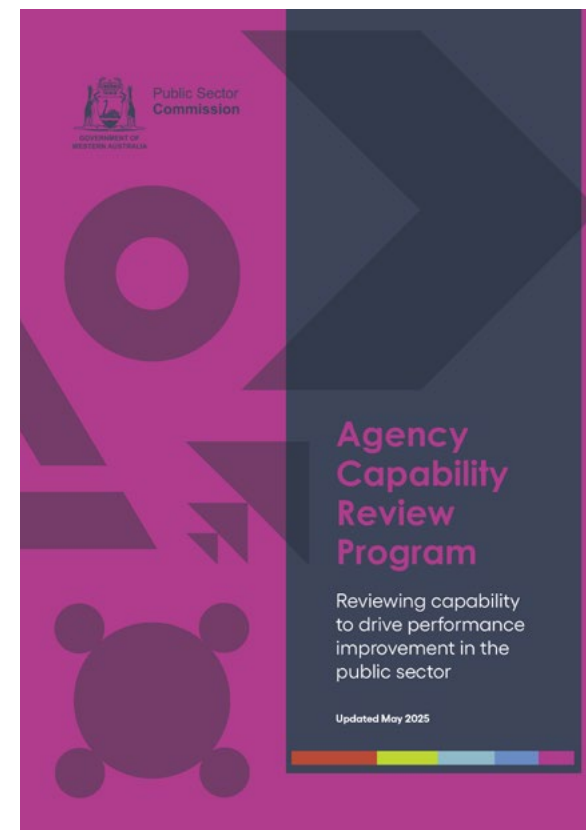
Agency Capability Review – program closure summary

The Department has successfully concluded its actions in response to the [Public Sector Commission's Agency Capability Review](#) (ACR), conducted from November 2021 to June 2022. The review identified key areas for improvement and highlighted strengths such as a values-based culture and strong internal engagement.

In response, we launched a reform program aligned with our [Strategic Plan 2022–26](#), delivering 39 initiatives including the Portfolio Operating Model to improve efficiency and leadership stability.

Due to evolving priorities and the State Government's environmental approvals reform, the program concluded early in December 2023, with resources redirected to high-impact areas.

The ACR has strengthened the Department's strategic planning, resource allocation, and readiness to meet environmental and community challenges. We remain committed to continuous improvement and future capability reviews.



Strategic planning refresh and future direction

In response to the rapidly evolving global landscape, we initiated a comprehensive refresh of our strategic planning approach. This process seeks to better align the Department with whole-of-government goals, adapt to internal portfolio changes, and respond to external driving forces.

From March to June, our staff joined a series of collaborative workshops to co-develop a new strategic framework. This framework will guide our future direction, unify staff around a shared purpose, and reinforce our commitment to serving the Western Australian community.

Through this initiative we are seeking to:

- develop an ambitious and compelling overarching statement of intent
- integrate with existing organisational values and planning instruments
- consider strategic risks and current operational realities
- establish guiding principles for delivery and impact.

We conducted an external environmental scan, which revealed the following critical insights:

- a need for resilient, long-term strategies that transcend political cycles

- growing demand for housing, energy, infrastructure and environmental resources
- an imperative to balance economic growth with environmental protection
- community expectations for strong environmental stewardship
- urgency around climate action through robust policy and implementation
- the importance of science, data and innovation in decision-making.

This strategic refresh will ensure that all our efforts are interconnected, future focused, and responsive to the challenges and opportunities ahead.



Celebrating excellence in Public Service – Woola Awards 2025

Each year to coincide with United Nations Public Service Day, we proudly host our Woola Awards and Employee Recognition Ceremony – a powerful reminder of the impact and dedication of our public service workforce.

In the spirit of the Noongar word 'Woola', meaning shout of praise, we come together as an organisation to honour the individuals and teams who have gone above and beyond in service to our community.

This year's recipient of the Aboriginal Empowerment Award was Sharon Oxenham, recognising her outstanding leadership and mentorship in delivering the water components of the Yamatji Nation ILUA and advancing Aboriginal empowerment in water management.

The Significant Achievement Award for 2025 went to a collaboration between our Environmental Crime Team, South Coast Region and Aquatic Science Branch. Together, these teams showed an outstanding commitment to improving environmental compliance and setting a new standard for sustainable dairy waste management in Western Australia.

This event is more than just recognition – it celebrates values, culture, and the people who make public service meaningful.

During the awards, we recognised and celebrated 116 staff for achieving milestone lengths of continuous service in the public sector between 10 and 40 years.

In addition, the ceremony acknowledged the 27 Making a Difference Award recipients from the past 12 months. These peer-nominated awards recognise individuals for embodying our values and for their workplace contributions.



Alistair Jones, Sharon Oxenham and George Heydon



Alistair Jones with members of the Environmental Crime Team, South Coast Region and Aquatic Science Branch

Our people are our business

We are committed to empowering women to take on leadership roles and break through barriers in senior service positions.

The [Women in Executive Leadership Development Experience Initiative](#) is a Public Sector Commission program designed to support a continuing pipeline of female leadership talent in government. It is part of a shared commitment to ensure talented women are skilled and ready to take on senior positions, and to build on the impact of their leadership across the public sector.

Kym Squires was the 2024–25 participant for our Department. Over 12 months Kym took on the role Director Strategic Projects to work with our Corporate Executive and oversee the development of the reform of the Department's recruitment and retention strategies. This project was both a ministerial and Department priority.



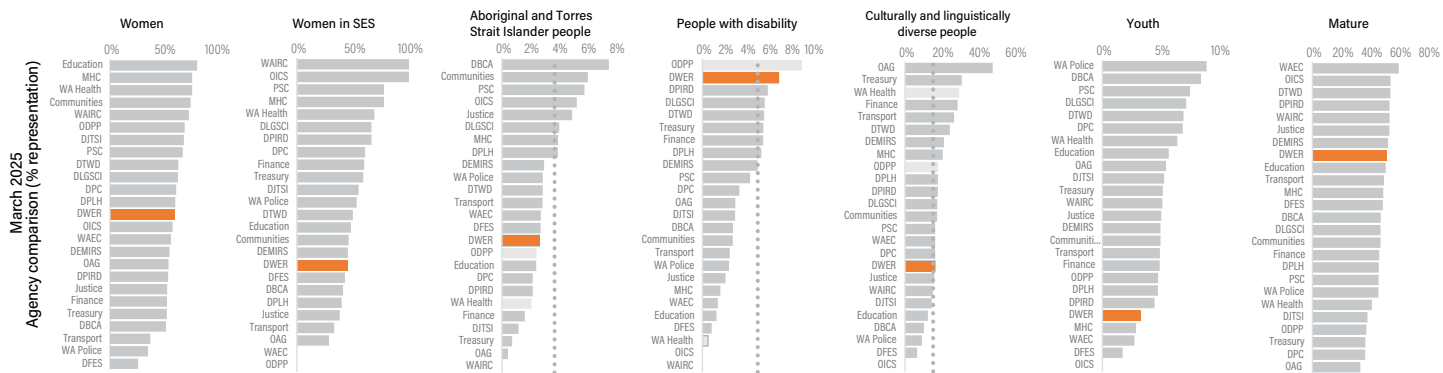
Kym Squires was the 2024–25 Women in Executive Leadership participant for our Department

Workforce snapshot

Our head count at 30 June 2025 was 1,227 employees, a growth of 54 employees in 2024–25. The Department has been twice recognised as a Top Inclusive employer by the Diversity Council of Australia, and this year we will again be participating in DCA's Inclusion@work study to understand our staff's experience of inclusion in our workplace and use the insights garnered to inform further workforce and diversity initiatives.

(March 2025)
Headcount: 1,218
Change in headcount over 3 months: +27 (+2.3%)

Diversity Group	Target %	Based on diversity response rate						Based on total public sector headcount	
		Current % and change since last quarter	Previous quarter %	Same time last year %	Current employee headcount in diversity group	Equity Index	Response rate	Target employee headcount in diversity group	Employee headcount below target
Women		60.8% ▲	60.7%	61.0%	741	93			
Women in Senior Executive Service (SES)	50.0%	45.0% ▼	47.6%	40.0%	9			10	1
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	3.7%	2.6% ▼	2.7%	2.0%	19	85	59.3% 722 496	46	27
People with disability	5.0%	6.9% ▼	7.0%	7.7%	43	101	51.2% 624 594	61	18
Culturally and linguistically diverse people	15.5%	16.5% ▲	15.8%	14.3%	159	68	79.0% 962 256	189	30
Youth (age 24 and below)	5.8%	3.3% ▲	2.4%	3.0%	40			71	31
Mature (age 45 and above)		51.7% ▼	51.9%	50.8%	630				



Response rate

The representation rates of employees in each diversity group is based on the number of valid responses. Agencies with less than 70% response rate is considered to be below the reliability threshold. This is also indicated in the agency comparison charts by the lighter grey bars.

If there are fewer than 10 employees in a diversity group, the equity index may not be a good indicator of the distribution of salary ranges of the diversity group.

Equity index

The equity index indicates the distribution of a diversity group across the salary ranges compared with the distribution of all employees across the same salary ranges across the public sector. An index of less than 100 indicates a concentration of employees at the lower salary range. An index greater than 100 indicates a concentration of employees at the higher salary range. An index of 100 indicates that the distribution of that diversity group is reflective of the general salary distribution of the agency.

Agency comparison legend

- Orange = Selected agency for this report
- Dark Grey = greater or equal to 70% response rate (see response rate definition)
- Light Grey = less than 70% response rate (see response rate definition)
- Dotted line = Target

New access and inclusion plan

The Department's new [Disability Access and Inclusion Plan](#) (DAIP) supports us to achieve the required government accessibility standards and meet our legislative requirements. It provides a strategic framework to underpin equitable access over seven key outcomes: services; facilities; information; service quality; complaints; consultation; and employment.

The DAIP was informed by feedback from internal and external stakeholders, including key stakeholders from the disability sector and community members who use our services or engage with the Department's work.

During the year our payroll service provider, Aurion, updated its software to align with the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.2](#). The system now has a more accessible platform for people with disabilities, and provides better visual appeal overall.





Significant issues impacting the agency

Current and emerging issues and trends

In our management of water and environmental resources, we are facing increasing pressure to meet expectations for social and economic growth and development, while protecting the environment and liveability.

Major issues and trends for the Department are:

- growing demand for housing, energy, infrastructure and environmental resources
- an imperative to balance economic growth with environmental protection
- community expectations for strong environmental stewardship
- urgency around climate action through robust policy and implementation
- the importance of science, data and innovation in decision-making.

Economic and social trends

Priorities set by the government for the EPA

- housing supply and expansion of the softwood plantation estate for the construction industry
- critical minerals, hydrogen and downstream processing projects for diversifying the state's economy
- transmission infrastructure and other projects to drive the renewable energy transition and [Collie's Just Transition](#)
- job-creating projects to support the state's economic development.

Artificial intelligence and new technology

Artificial Intelligence (AI) can transform how data is analysed and has the potential to improve environmental regulation.

It also has known risks being considered by industry and governments including security vulnerabilities, legal concerns and financial implications related to acquisition, licensing and development of AI tools.

The Department's AI adoption strategy is guided by the [WA Government AI Assurance Framework](#) to introduce, develop, and utilise AI technology to enhance efficiency, improve decision-making, and bolster environmental regulation efforts.

Changes in written law

Environmental approvals have been a focus of industry, national and state jurisdictions driving reforms to remove duplication in assessments by state and federal agencies.

Western Australia is working to align with Commonwealth changes, while working on its own reform program to update how approvals for development and industry activities are regulated, and modernise environmental legislation to meet industry and community expectations.

In October the Western Australian Parliament passed the [Environmental Protection Act Amendment Bill 2024](#). Under the new legislation, other government regulators can process and issue their own approvals, parallel to EPA assessments, improving timeframes and providing more certainty for industry.

Emissions targets climate change

The State Government recognises the need to take significant action this decade to reduce emissions, transition emissions-intensive industries and protect Western Australia's economy from carbon transition risks.

Emissions tracking and reporting is supporting delivery of the State Government's climate change commitments, including its target to cut emissions

from its operations to 80 per cent below 2020 levels by 2030. The Australian Government's [Net Zero Plan](#) will lay out and extend Australia's action on climate change.

Climate and program risks

Climate risk

The State Government has many climate risks to manage across its respective departments and agencies. These include impacts to agricultural production, damage to infrastructure from sea level rises and extreme events, biodiversity loss, damage to water resources and the environment, and human health impacts.

	Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development	Department of Health	Department of Water and Environmental Regulation	Main Roads
Agency Objective	We develop and protect WA's agriculture and food sector and aquatic resources, and build vibrant regions with strong economies.	We help people stay healthy and provide access to timely, high quality, patient-centred health care.	We protect, manage and regulate the state's environment and water resources.	We provide a world-class, safe, reliable and sustainable road-based transport system.
Climate Risk and Impact	Declining growing season rainfall in the South West Land Division is driving changes to cropping practices and soil management. By 2050, growers could face shorter growing seasons and even greater variation in annual yields.	Heatwaves of greater frequency, duration and intensity are increasing heat-related health issues and morbidity, placing greater pressure on health services. Heat-related deaths are expected to double over the next 40 years.	Reduced rainfall is affecting water demand and allocation. Rainfall has reduced faster than changes to groundwater use, our once-healthy system is under strain.	Sea level rise across WA is expected to impact on 9,000 km of roadways resulting in \$11.3 billion in damages.

The Department's primary role under the WA government's climate risk management strategic objectives is protecting water sources for sustainable use and the environment.

As the lead agency in the state's [Climate Policy](#) and [Climate Adaptation Strategy](#) we are leading delivery of high-resolution climate projections and sector adaptation plans to identify sector-specific climate impacts and priority actions to enhance resilience.

Our work in the [Indian Ocean Territories \(IOT\)](#) is the first of its kind preparing coastal communities for extreme climate risk.

Contamination risks in recycling and recovery

Contamination and hazardous and toxic materials are posing risks to the state's waste recovery program. Forever chemicals (PFAS/PFOS) have the potential to disrupt the development of FOGO processing initiatives being supported by state and federal governments and related industries, due to their presence in some packaging material that is being fed into FOGO. Contamination of recycling materials disrupts the circular economy and creates concern about unplanned risks in new recovery and recycling directions.

► Lithium battery fires

The rapid proliferation of lithium-ion batteries in consumer goods presents a critical threat to the waste and resource recovery sector. When incorrectly placed in kerbside bins, these batteries are often crushed, triggering intense fires in collection trucks and facilities. These incidents cause pollution, create a grave and direct risk to worker safety, damage essential infrastructure, and jeopardise the viability of recycling operations. Addressing this growing hazard is a key priority for the [Waste Authority](#).



WasteSorted: [Never Bin a Battery](#) campaign video



Department of Water and Environmental Regulation

Prime House 8 Davidson Terrace Joondalup WA 6027

Telephone: 08 6364 7000 | Fax: 08 6364 7001

wa.gov.au/dwer

info@dwer.wa.gov.au

