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# MEDIA RELEASE

## Water utilities unite to cut emissions in Race To Zero

Record breaking droughts. Record breaking floods. Communities in Australia and New Zealand are no strangers to the huge impact climate change is already exerting on water supplies. The recent IPCC Assessment Report 6 has described the current outlook on climate change as 'code red for humanity'.

But managing water services for our cities and towns is also an energy intensive activity. Globally, water use, storage and distribution are responsible for around 10% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Water services also produce around 5-8% of global methane emissions. The water industry has a central role to play in reducing emissions, but is also in a unique position to produce renewable energy.

Together with Water UK, we are excited to announce that 13 Australian and 1 New Zealand water utility have joined the UN-led Race To Zero campaign, adding their voice to the global message that industry is tackling climate change, alongside 12 major UK water utilities.

Australian and New Zealand utilities join their counterparts from the UK who have also pledged to reach Net Zero Emissions by 2050 or earlier, with interim targets within the next decade. Combined these utilities serve over 60 million people in Australia, New Zealand and the UK.

'Congratulations to all the Australian and New Zealand water utilities for this show of commitment and leadership on mitigating the impacts climate change, felt so acutely in the water sector', said Mr Adam Lovell, Executive Director, Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA).

'As early adopters of wind, solar and waste to energy technology to power our infrastructure, we are thrilled to see so many of our water utilities joining the Race To Zero pledge.

There are also many other water utilities who are well on their way in contributing to a net zero future and may join the Race To Zero campaign in the coming months. The industry is on the front foot in this rapidly evolving area, especially in light of the recent IPCC report on climate change', said Mr Lovell.

The past 20 years have seen the two worst droughts in recorded history in many parts of Australia and New Zealand, requiring us to build rainfall-independent water security options like recycling and desalination – which are also energy-intensive. The industry works to ensure that this energy is sourced from renewable power.

'Climate change is already causing irreversible harm. But it also creates unique opportunities. The urban water industry is at the cutting edge of many innovations to reduce its carbon footprint like producing renewable energy from food waste, harvesting the valuable resources that can be recovered through wastewater treatment, producing green hydrogen and ammonia which can be used as green fuels, using significant land corridors and reservoirs for solar panels and transitioning to electric vehicles,' said Mr Lovell.

### Media inquiries

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The Race To Zero is a United Nations-backed global campaign rallying non-state actors – including companies, cities, regions, financial and educational institutions – to take rigorous and immediate action to halve global emissions by 2030 and deliver a healthier, fairer zero carbon world.

To elevate the role of water in the climate crisis and the need for water to be at the centre of climate solutions for mitigation and adaptation, the Conference of the Parties 26 (COP26) from 1-12 November in Glasgow, will include a Water and Climate Pavilion for the first time.

More information on the work being done by individual Australian and New Zealand utilities, including quotes from water leaders is available on [Google Drive here](#).

Some facts about the collective impact of the 14 Australian and New Zealand water utilities who have joined the Race To Zero:

- Serve over 18 million customers
- Total of 160,000 km of water and wastewater pipelines
- Total of 354 treatment plants
- Pledges to reach net zero by 2025 to 2050
- Total net emissions: 847,637tCO<sub>2</sub>e\*
- Total electricity use: 1,199,192 MWh\*
- 175MW of existing solar assets
- 220MW of planned solar assets.

The 14 utilities are (see slide deck for locations):

- Barwon Water
- Coliban Water
- Gippsland Water
- Goulburn Valley Water
- Icon Water
- Melbourne Water
- SA Water
- South East Water
- Southern Rural Water
- Sydney Water
- Unitywater
- Urban Utilities
- Watercare (New Zealand)
- Yarra Valley Water

WSAA is the peak body representing the urban water industry in Australia. Its members provide water and wastewater services to over 24 million customers in Australia and New Zealand, including many of Australia's largest industrial and commercial enterprises.

\* Some 2019/20 and some 2020/21 data

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