



**WATER SERVICES**  
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA



# Communication on Engagement

Water Services Association of  
Australia (WSAA)

Reporting period 1 March 2018 –  
1 March 2020





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## About WSAA

The Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) is the peak body that supports the Australian urban water industry. Our members provide water and sewerage services to over 20 million customers in Australia and New Zealand and many of Australia's largest industrial and commercial enterprises.

WSAA facilitates collaboration, knowledge sharing, networking and cooperation within the urban water industry. The collegiate approach of its members has led to industrywide advances to national water issues.

# PART 1 - Statement of Continued Support

25 March 2020

I am pleased to reaffirm the commitment of the Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) to the United Nations Global Compact and to the ten principles in relation to Human Rights, Labour, Environment and Anti-Corruption, which underpin the accord. This is WSAA's Communication on Engagement with the United Nations Global Compact and we welcome feedback on its contents.

In this our first Communication on Engagement, we describe the actions that our organisation has taken to support the UN Global Compact and its Principles, as suggested for an organisation such as WSAA. We also commit to sharing this information with our stakeholders, using our primary channels of communication.

Moving forward, WSAA will continue to lead the urban water industry in using all 17 Goals as a lens to frame the broader contribution urban water makes to a prosperous, sustainable and equitable society.

Kind regards



**Adam Lovell**  
Executive Director  
Water Services Association of Australia

# Part 2: Description of actions

## Background

The water industry provides the most essential of essential services, and we have a tremendous responsibility to support productive, thriving communities. The SDGs offer a unique opportunity for the urban water industry to come together, learn from and contribute to international experience and make a significant positive impact on the community both locally and globally. In addition, water as a sector is singled out with SDG 6: clean water and sanitation. Goal 6 highlights the fundamental role of the water industry's core operations and the contribution its activities make to future prosperity both locally and globally. No other sector is singled out with a Goal in this way. This is part of the reason the Goals resonate with the urban water industry and a key driver to inspire WSAA to lead the industry in promoting and advancing the Goals.

WSAA's goal is increased collaboration between water utilities, governments, regulators, other stakeholders and the community with a focus on creating a sustainable prosperous future. As part of this we hope to achieve:

- Greater awareness of the SDGs with our members (over 100 members in Australia and New Zealand)
- More members signing onto the industry commitment to support and advance the SDGs
- Embedding of the SDGs in water utility organisational strategy and planning.

Achieving the Goals is a long term project and there are many points at which water businesses can join the journey. Our desire is that the WSAA, through our reports and working groups, can encourage collaboration as well as guide utilities to embrace responsibility and demonstrate leadership in meeting the SDGs.

Since the release of our paper - Global Goals for Local Communities: Urban water advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals in August 2017 we have been working to support and promote the SDGs in partnership with utilities, key stakeholders and governments.

## Industry Commitment - ongoing

As at 1 March 2020, 25 WSAA members have signed onto our industry commitment. The most recent member joined the commitment in January 2020.

### **The commitment**

We support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. As an industry we provide water, sanitation and stormwater services to over 20 million customers and understand that water is critical to sustaining life.

As providers of essential services we want to see the realisation of Sustainable Development Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

We believe universal access to safe water and sanitation is key to creating a better

future and we know there is more work to be done.

As an industry we will:

1. support and promote the 17 Sustainable Development Goals;
2. support and work with Governments and other agencies to increase the capability and capacity of our region to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6;
3. commit to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6 within the scope of our operations

WSAA continues to promote the commitment and invites its members to sign on.

## Release on Progress Report August 2018

In August 2018 we launched our progress report - Sustainable Development Goals Progress Report: Global goals for local communities. The Report is supported by nine case studies and demonstrates the progress by the industry to support and promote the SDGs in partnership with other utilities, customers and stakeholders, and shows the industry's contribution to achieving national and global SDG commitment.

## Release of explainer video: SDG's and the water industry August 2018

In addition we launched a short video aimed at explaining the role water businesses can play in contributing to the SDGs. The video was developed to help the water industry talk about the types of outcomes engagement with the Goals can achieve, both in and out of the industry. See the video here: <https://www.wsaa.asn.au/news/watch-sustainable-development-goals>



## WSAA Working Groups

WSAA has an SDG Working Group and an SDG Community of Practice. Both include representatives from utilities around Australia and NZ. Both groups share information through WSAA's member only section on our website.

The SDG Working Group meets in person and in the last year has been working on the development of a set of SDG indicators to drive long term sustainability outcomes for water utilities. This work is being undertaken for WSAA by the Monash Sustainable Development Institute (Monash University).

The indicators will seek to reflect and measure the contribution of water utilities to the SDG targets. The set of indicators is currently being refined and we will then consider how they can be used to guide future utility outcomes.

## SDG focused sessions at WSAA events

WSAA brings MDs/CEOs together a number of times a year. Annually we also host an event that includes Chairs of utilities. At these events over the past 2 years we have included sessions to highlight the SDGs, the industry commitment, what the SDGs mean for Boards and businesses and practical advice and tools on how they can seek to advance the SDGs.

At Ozwater 2019 WSAA convened a session called Working towards the SDGs – meeting Goal 6 in indigenous communities. Ozwater is Australia's international water conference and trade exhibition, and is the largest water exhibition in the Southern Hemisphere.

WSAA staff have also spoken at events in Australia and internationally about the work the Australian and New Zealand water industry is doing to contribute to meeting the SDGs.

## Australian Government SDG6 Working Group

WSAA is part of the Australian Government SDG6 Working Group along with several of our members. The Working Group has been established to monitor and provide advice at a national level on Australia's achievement of SDG 6.

## SDGs as part of a new National Water Initiative

WSAA is calling for a new National Water Initiative (NWI) in Australia. The NWI is a shared commitment by governments to increase the efficiency of Australia's water use, leading to greater certainty for investment and productivity, for rural and urban communities and for the environment. WSAA is calling for a new NWI as we believe it requires updating and many of the challenges in urban water are the same across Australia. Experience has shown that joint national action is more effective than ad hoc approaches.

Along with recognising future challenges like urban growth and climate change, WSAA is advocating for a new NWI to provide an incentive based framework for meeting the industry's obligations under the SDGs.

## Submission to Senate Inquiry March 2018

The Australian Federal Senate undertook an inquiry into the Sustainable Development Goals and highlighted the leadership of the Australian water sector in galvanising its efforts to achieve the goals within Australia and to assist our close neighbours. WSAA provided a submission to the inquiry in March 2018 on behalf of the industry.

# **Part 3: Measurement of outcomes**

## **National recognition of our work**

In June 2018 the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) released Australia's Voluntary National Review on progress with the Sustainable Development Goals. The Review showcases the work being done by governments, businesses, communities, individuals and academia.

The DFAT Review noted the "Australian water industry has raised awareness of SDG6 and all the SDGs in its outreach to customers, businesses and among political leaders". It also highlighted work being done by our members.

At the same time, the Australia SDGs website was launched which includes projects from organisations across Australia - including case studies from the WSAA Global Goals Paper.

## **International recognition of our work**

Following the release of our reports the efforts of the water industry have been acknowledged overseas. DANVA, the WSAA equivalent in Denmark, translated and used the WSAA Global Goals for Local Communities document to generate their own water sector program.

UK utilities, including Anglian Water and Severn Trent, have specifically cited the leadership of the Australian water sector in also committing to the SDGs (in total or in part).

## **Whole of industry commitment**

25 WSAA members have now signed up to the WSAA industry commitment to meet SDG 6 and advance all Goals within the scope of their operations.

## **Members joining the UN Global Compact Network**

We have seen individual utilities join the UN Global Compact Network and sign up to the Global Compact including Yarra Valley Water, South East Water, Melbourne Water, City West Water and SA Water.

## Contact Details

WSAA welcomes the opportunity to discuss this Communication on Engagement further.

If there are any details you wish to follow up on please contact:

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