

31 October 2023

EPA Biosolids Consultation Team
New South Wales Environmental Protection Authority (NSW EPA)

Re: Biosolids Regulatory Review

The Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) represents the urban water utility industry, which is directly impacted by the regulatory frameworks governing biosolids. As a national body, WSAA is committed to ensuring that biosolids are managed in a manner that is both environmentally sustainable and beneficial for the industry. The NSW Biosolids Regulatory Review Issues Paper presents an opportunity to align the NSW regulatory approach with contemporary practices and scientific understanding.

Following consultation with our members, the following represents a collective summary of a national industry perspective on the NSW Biosolids Regulatory Review.

Key Comments and Recommendations:

1. Risk- and Outcome-Based Approach:

WSAA supports a regulatory framework that adopts a risk- and outcome-based approach to the land application of biosolids. Such an approach should be sensitive to the properties of the receiving environment, ensuring that biosolids reuse is fit-for-purpose and that heavy metal concentration limits are reflective of regional soil variability.

2. Source Control:

To effectively manage contaminants, we must address them at their origin. While wastewater treatment plants are vital, they shouldn't stand alone in this effort. By emphasizing upstream source control measures, we can involve policy-makers, regulators, and industries in a unified approach. This could mean improved regulation for the import and use of specific substances, enhancing oversight in the value chain, and urging manufacturers to adopt preventive measures. WSAA welcomes the opportunity to engage with NSW EPA, aiming for a balanced and sustainable strategy that lessens the sole reliance on wastewater facilities.

3. Consistency with National Guidelines:

Regulatory consistency is crucial for the industry. The proposed guidelines should align with other national regulations to avoid confusion and ensure a unified approach across jurisdictions.

4. Responses to Guided Questions:

- **Upstream Regulatory Approach:** An upstream approach to minimise contaminants entering sewerage systems is vital. This could include restrictions or bans on certain chemicals and

Sydney Office

Level 6, 75 Elizabeth Street
Sydney, NSW, 2000
P +61 (0) 2 9221 5966

Melbourne Office

Level 8, Suite 8.02, 401 Docklands Drive
Docklands, VIC, 3008
P +61 (0) 3 8605 7666

wastes.

- **Pathogen Management:** The adoption of a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) approach for pathogen management is supported, as it provides predictable health outcomes and is consistent with other national guidelines.
- **Land Management Controls:** Mandatory controls should be context-specific, focusing on preserving soil quality and minimising environmental impact.
- **Microplastics and Other Contaminants:** The industry recommends that the EPA consider regulatory measures to reduce microplastics and provide standard methodologies for their characterisation in biosolids.
- **Support Elements:** The regulatory approach should include clear exposure pathways for ecological and human health risks. Support elements such as education, grants, and partnerships are also crucial.

Conclusion:

WSAA recognises the complexity of biosolids management and the need for a regulatory framework that is both protective and practical. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input on the NSW Biosolids Regulatory Review Issues Paper and look forward to continued engagement with the EPA and other stakeholders to develop a robust and sustainable biosolids strategy.

Kind Regards,



Jason Mingo

Liveable Communities Manager

Sydney Office

Level 6, 75 Elizabeth Street
Sydney, NSW, 2000
P +61 (0) 2 9221 5966

Melbourne Office

Level 8, Suite 8.02, 401 Docklands Drive
Docklands, VIC, 3008
P +61 (0) 3 8605 7666