

10 December 2021

Submission for the Central and Gippsland Sustainable Water Strategy Discussion Draft
Department Environment, Land, Water, and Planning
Victoria

WSAA is pleased to make a submission on the draft Central and Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy (“the strategy”). WSAA is the peak industry body representing the urban water industry. Our members provide water and sewerage services to over 24 million customers in Australia and New Zealand and many of Australia's largest industrial and commercial enterprises.

WSAA encourages and supports the intentions of the strategy for the region “*to make great use of manufactured water sources, such as desalinated water and fit-for-purpose recycled water, as well as stormwater*”. This principle has been enshrined in the national water initiative since 2008. With the forecasted impacts of climate change, it is pertinent to provide for increased resilience of supply and we commend the level of community involvement and participation in the development of the strategy. Further, we support the strategy in moving towards more rainfall independent sources, the two main options being that of desalinated water and purified recycled water for drinking.

Taking an ‘all options’ approach ensures the community can receive the best value and most resilient water supply options available within a particular geographic context. The strategy aims to achieve this through a long-term approach – implementing solutions that work now, but also starting to prepare for options that may address climate and population challenges that will emerge in future. However, further clarity on key elements and inclusion of the ‘all options’ approach may assist in improving the adaptive capacity within the strategy.

For example, WSAA recognises the advancing national discussion in the urban water sector about building resilience. From a water supply resilience and circular economy perspective, the key is using recycled water from both wastewater and stormwater, for a broader range of uses, including purified recycled water for drinking. Despite the principle outlined above, the draft strategy does not provide for this option sufficiently among the those that are considered. Through our recent National Customer Perception Survey, we have been pleased to see the positive attitude by customers towards purified recycled water for drinking. The survey found that, on average 3 in 4 customers from around Australia (over 8000 people surveyed nationally) were open to purified recycled water as part of the options for future drinking water supply (Figure 1).

During the Productivity Commission’s current National Water Reform review, the Australian water industry nominated as a key priority the need for all water supply options, including using purified recycled water for drinking, to be on the table as part of modern, comprehensive water supply planning.

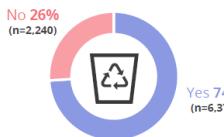
Sydney Office
Level 9, 420 George Street
Sydney, NSW, 2000
P +61 (0) 3 8605 7666

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

Public water literacy and engagement

3 in 4 are open to PRW in future drinking water supply

Are you open to purified recycled water also being considered as part of our future drinking water supply?



Are you interested in hearing about how the water industry can purify water from various sources to drinking water quality or better?

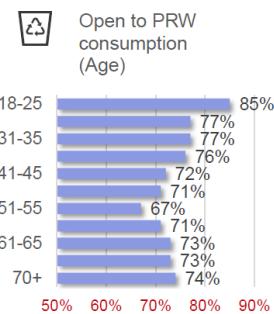
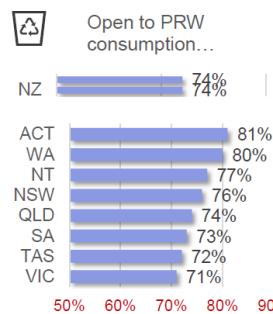
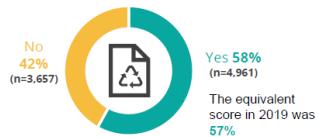


Figure 1. WSAA National Customer Perception Survey 2021.

We would like to provide our support to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and further encourage the exploration of this option within the strategy. Many water utilities across Australia are utilising adaptive planning approaches that ensure a level of preparedness to quickly shift to producing purified recycled water for drinking as an option should the need arise.

Already, purified recycled water for drinking forms part of the drinking water supply in 35 cities globally, including in Australia in Perth and South East Queensland, as noted in Figure 2 below. In addition, three NSW regions recently released draft water security plans for public exhibition which all took an 'all options' approach including purified recycled water for drinking: Hunter region, Central Coast, and Greater Sydney. Communities' views on the first two regions have been published and show around 70% of ppl are open to considering purified recycled water for drinking. The portfolios preferred by the community for Hunter region & Central Coast Council contained exploration of this option for the future.

Sydney Office

Level 9, 420 George Street
Sydney, NSW, 2000
P +61 (0) 3 8605 7666

Melbourne Office

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

**Global locations
using purified
recycled water
for drinking**

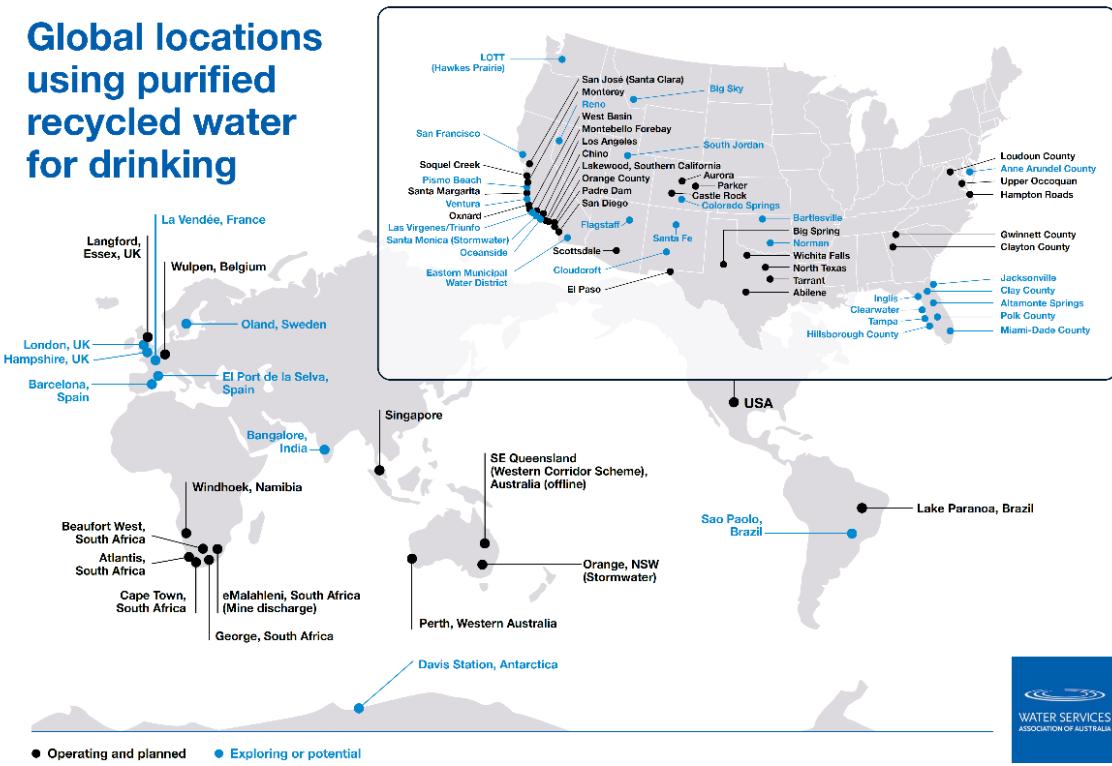


Figure 2. Source - WSAA
[\(\[https://www.wsaa.asn.au/sites/default/files/publication/download/Cities%20using%20PRW_Map.pdf\]\(https://www.wsaa.asn.au/sites/default/files/publication/download/Cities%20using%20PRW_Map.pdf\)\)](https://www.wsaa.asn.au/sites/default/files/publication/download/Cities%20using%20PRW_Map.pdf)

WSAA would be pleased to meet and further outline the evolving discussion on all options to secure water supply and the planning considerations needed.

Contact

WSAA welcomes the opportunity to discuss this submission further.

Adam Lovell

Executive Director

adam.lovell@wsaa.asn.au
Ph 02 8397 7291

Sydney Office
Level 9, 420 George Street
Sydney, NSW, 2000
P +61 (0) 3 8605 7666

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