Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders

Sydney Catchment Authority (SCA)

SCA is responsible, primarily under the Sydney Water Catchment Management Act 1998, for the management of the Catchment, dams and infrastructure that provide Sydney’s bulk water supply. SCA’s management takes form in a variety of projects and under numerous pieces of legislation.

SCA has further statutory responsibilities set out in three other documents. Their Operating Licence sets out the performance and water quality objectives SCA must meet and is granted by the Governor of NSW. A Water Management Licence is granted to SCA by DIPNR, and SCA must meet licence requirements on monitoring, reporting, and water releases and transfers. The Bulk Water Supply Agreement addresses the supply of raw water to their customers (primarily Sydney Water). This agreement specifies what the quality of the water must be that is supplied to the water filtration plants.

SCA jointly manages the Special Areas with the Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW) under the Special Areas Strategic Plan of Management. The Plan sets the framework for a high level of protection of the natural and cultural heritage in these areas, and maintain the areas as intact buffers for the storages.

Current legislation allows SCA to exercise power under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997, regarding the impact of point sources of pollution on water quality in the Catchment. This is particularly true in the Special Areas where SCA can restrict access and activities.

The SCA must also play a role in overseeing the development of the Catchment, under SEPP58, which assists in protecting Sydney’s drinking water supply. Types of development likely to have a large impact, or a lesser impact in a Special Area, must go to SCA’s Chief Executive for approval.

Department of Infrastructure Planning and Natural Resources (DIPNR)

DIPNR is a developer of policies for natural resource management and maintains databases on the condition of the State’s land, soil, water and vegetation. DIPNR is involved in the planning, policy and regulation in relation to the natural and built environment, rural and urban management (including urban growth, renewal and consolidation) and the development of housing policies. The Department aims to achieve coordinated and sustainable management of the State’s natural resources through an integrated catchment management framework.

DIPNR manages the planning and sharing of water across the state, and is preparing the Sydney and Regional Centres Drinking Water Catchments Regional Environmental Plan (REP) for the catchments providing water to Sydney and adjacent regional centres. This REP will provide catchment management strategies to improve the planning, management and knowledge base for water quality protection in the catchments. State Environmental Protection Policy 58 (SEPP 58) ‘Protecting Sydney’s Water Supply’ is currently in place to perform this function until the REP is finalised. DIPNR also administers water management licences issued under the Water Act 1912, such as for surface water or groundwater extractions.

Along with local councils and catchment management committees, DIPNR is responsible for producing the Catchment Blueprints which are aimed at natural resource management at a sub-catchment level.
Department of Environment and Conservation

The Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW) is a new government department formed in September 2003, and joins together the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), the Botanic Gardens Trust and Resource NSW. The Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW) does not encompass, but shares links with, the SCA.

The EPA works towards protection and improvement of water quality for coastal marine, estuarine, inland and groundwater and recognises the value of water ways to: aquatic and riparian ecosystems and habitats; public health and public amenity; and economic development. The EPA is the issuer and regulator of licences for polluting activities in NSW and undertakes a public education role in relation to pollution.

The NPWS is responsible for maintaining the parks and reserves in NSW. They also jointly manage with the SCA the catchment’s Special Areas, under the Special Areas Strategic Plan of Management.

NSW Department of Health (DOH)

The primary aim of NSW Health is to protect the health of the public, and thus they have a role ensuring safe drinking water. DOH monitors the quality of drinking water via information provided by the agencies it regulates, and develops standards and guidelines for the treatment of waste water.

It manages the testing program established to verify Cryptosporidium and Giardia testing results supplied by Sydney Water, the SCA and independent laboratories.

The Chief Health Officer of DOH has the power to restrict or prevent the use of water considered unfit for human consumption.

Department of Mineral Resources (DMR)

The DMR is responsible for approving, regulating and monitoring mining and associated activities in NSW. They have a role in the rehabilitation of abandoned and derelict mine sites, and are currently rehabilitating some priority sites in the Catchment with SCA.

NSW Agriculture

NSW Agriculture conducts agricultural research and provides practical and sustainable farm production and environmental advice to commercial farmers, graziers, horticulturists, agribusiness and other groups. This collaborative effort draws together a comprehensive range of information and knowledge which can also be disseminated through best management practices guidelines. There are extensive areas of agriculture in the Catchment.

NSW Fisheries

NSW Fisheries manages the living aquatic resources of NSW. It focuses on managing commercial and recreational fishing, protecting key fish habitats, conserving aquatic biodiversity and promoting ecologically sustainable development. It carries out scientific research, and provides management, advisory and compliance services. It advises the government on the use and conservation of living aquatic resources. In consultation with industry and the community, NSW Fisheries develops policies and regulations on resource sharing and allocation. NSW Fisheries have undergone substantial fish sampling in the Catchment and are currently investigating the effects on fish of the barriers (dams, weirs etc.) in the Catchment.

Local Councils

Local councils determine and approve proposed developments and prepare local environment plans. Under the Environment Planning & Assessment Act (EP&A Act), local Councils must prepare Local
Environmental Plans (LEPs) and assess development applications (DAs). If councils are to approve a development that doesn’t require development consent, they must still take full account of its likely effect on the environment.

Although the EPA is responsible for granting works approvals and licences, local councils play a major role in regulating pollution control. Under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 (POEO Act), councils have the power to issue notices ordering pollution control measures for premises or activities which are not the subject of an EPA licence.

Councills provide major infrastructure services such as sewerage and drainage connection to residents land, and regulates on-site effluent disposal in unsewered areas. Councils require approval from the Minister for the construction or extension of dams, water treatment works and flood retaining basins.

Local councils are represented on Catchment Management Boards.

**Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs)**

The Government recently announced the establishment of 13 CMAs across the State. The Sydney Drinking Water Catchment falls across two CMAs, the Hawkesbury–Nepean CMA and the Southern Rivers CMA.

The CMAs are to be established from January 2004 as independent statutory bodies. The CMAs will build on the work of the Catchment Management Boards and related committees in developing catchment action plans and working with local landholders in developing Property Vegetation Plans.

**Department of Energy, Utilities and Sustainability**

The Department promotes the sustainable supply and use of energy and urban water in NSW. They are involved in managing the water supply for country towns and sewerage schemes in the Catchment.

**Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of NSW (IPART)**

IPART’s historical role was the setting of prices for service providers, but has recently expanded to include industry and licence reviews. IPART monitor prices, and now also industry performance against licence provisions, including the water quality and environmental impacts of the water supply industry. IPART has reviewed SWC’s licence and reviewed SCA’s water management licence in 2002. It made a recommendation that no changes to the licence occur, but that SCA develop with SWC and DPIRN a Demand and Supply Management Strategy.

**NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS)**

RFS are responsible for the coordination and planning of bushfire fighting and hazard reduction operations throughout NSW. At the local government scale, there are Bushfire Management Committees included in the above role, including representatives from NPWS and SCA. SCA has worked with the RFS on improving their fire management practices.

**NSW Rural Lands Protection Boards (RLPB)**

They are involved in the control of pest animal species and livestock diseases. They also have an advisory role to landholders. SCA and the NPWS have worked with RLPB to ensure the coordination of pest control strategies in the Catchment.
NSW Rural Assistance Authority

This authority administers assistance measures to rural producers and small businesses. Conservation funding exists, for example, to encourage improved and sustainable land management. Projects include woody weed control and livestock effluent control. The authority also manages the Water Reform Structural Adjustment Program. The Program’s aims include the adoption of improved irrigation practices, increased water use efficiency on farms, and minimising negative impacts from irrigation upon the NSW environment.

State Forests of NSW

State Forests are responsible for sustainably managing more than 2 million hectares of public native forests and a large area of planted forests in NSW. Included in State Forests' aims is the management of forests for which it is responsible and providing benefits to the NSW public now and in the future. There are moderate areas of State Forests in the Catchment.

Dams Safety Committee

Its statutory function is to ensure all prescribed dams in NSW are safe and maintained. The Committee must also ensure that mining operations near dams do not affect the integrity of the dam or create significant water loss from a storage.

NSW Healthy Rivers Commission (HRC)

HRC’s role is to independently assess selected NSW rivers and make recommendation to the government on appropriate management strategies for ecological, social and economic benefits. The Hawkesbury-Nepean, Shoalhaven and Woronora Rivers have all been assessed by the HRC, and recommendations made in the inquiries were accepted by the government.

Guidelines specified by the HRC also make up part of SCA’s assessment of catchment water quality.

NSW State Algal Coordinating Committee (SACC)

SACC’s main role is implementing the NSW Algal Management Strategy which is aimed at minimising the occurrence and impacts of algal blooms in NSW, specifically on the algal contingency planning and response areas. The strategy includes CMBs, government, industry and the public stakeholders. They also oversee the Regional Algal Coordinating Committees (RACC). RACCs have a more focused research and monitoring roles, and the Metropolitan/South Coast RACC is particularly active in the Hawkesbury-Nepean.

SCA has adopted the SACC guidelines for cyanobacteria concentrations in recreational waters.

NSW Heritage Council

The Council’s main role is the implementation of the Heritage Act 1977. This includes management design and implementation for heritage listings and an advisory role on matters affecting heritage sites. Heritage Council listings include both built and key natural environments. The Wingecarribee Swamp in the Catchment is a state listed natural site. There are many built sites of state and local heritage significance in the Catchment, including Avon, Cataract and Cordeaux Dams.

Universities

Universities are often involved in providing expertise and research support for SCA. For example, UNSW and Macquarie and Sydney Universities have all been involved in research on pathogens. UWS has assisted in creating carbon and nutrient budgets, and Wollongong University has assisted with sediment budgets.
Sydney Water Corporation (SWC)

SWC is the SCA’s major bulk water customer, supplying the Sydney, Illawarra and Blue Mountains regions with drinking water. SWC operate nine water filtration plants (WFPs) in the Catchment and, under the Bulk Water Supply Agreement between SWC and SCA, specify the quantity and quality of the raw water the WFPs should receive.

Industry

Industry in the Catchment is diverse and includes: mining and extractive industry, forestry and horticulture, livestock and commercial industries, and telecommunication and energy-based industry. Some of these activities are regulated and licensed. When this is the case, the operators have an obligation to comply with the licence conditions. All industry is also required to submit for initial development approval. Within the Catchment, SEPP 58 applies to developments with a high potential threat to water quality, particularly in the special areas, and these developments are obligated to undergo a more rigorous approval process. Industry also has an intrinsic role to minimise pollution.

Residents

Individuals must seek Council approval to conduct water supply work, draw water from a council water supply, conduct sewerage or storm-water works, or connect a private drain or sewer to a public drain or sewer. Residents can have a role in community groups which are active in decision making. All residents have an intrinsic role to minimise pollution.