About the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water
Who is the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water?

The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) is the lead NSW Government department with responsibility for protecting and caring for our environment, managing water resources and developing and coordinating programs to address the impacts of climate change in NSW.

DECCW employs over 4000 staff. These staff, many of whom work in regional areas, bring an exceptional range of expertise to DECCW’s work, including policy, science, education, regulation, planning, communication, land management and fire fighting.

Where did DECCW come from?

On 11 June 2009, the (then) Premier announced significant public sector reforms to reduce the number of agencies from 160 to 13. As part of this reform, the (former) NSW Government brought together a number of environment and natural resource management related responsibilities and services into one organisation to:

• provide an integrated response to the unprecedented challenges of climate change
• progress reforms in sustainable management and regulation of our natural resources
• effectively manage our terrestrial and marine parks and reserves.

DECCW builds on the strengths of its combined agencies and uses that knowledge, science, innovation, and regulatory and field experience to tackle priority environmental, climate change, natural resource and cultural heritage issues for NSW.

The Government has combined responsibilities of the former Department of Environment and Climate Change with the water responsibilities of the former Department of Water and Energy. DECCW reports to the Minister for Climate Change and the Environment and the Minister for Water.

As part of the public sector reform, the new NSW Office of Water has been established within the DECCW. The Office of Water is responsible for strategic management of the State’s surface water and groundwater resources.
So what does DECCW do?

DECCW delivers a number of well-recognised services and fulfils important legislative authorities, including:

- staffing the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Office of Water
- acting under the powers of the statutory Environment Protection Authority (EPA) in regulatory matters
- convening the independent EPA Board which provides policy direction and approves significant prosecutions undertaken by DECCW
- supporting staff of the Botanic Gardens Trust (BGT) who are part of DECCW, although BGT and its Board of Trustees report separately to the Minister for Climate Change and the Environment
- administering programs on behalf of the NSW Environmental Trust and providing support for the Marine Parks Authority and the 13 Catchment Management Authorities across NSW
- strategic management of the State’s surface and groundwater.

Our approach

DECCW provides extensive information networks, educational programs, grants and incentives to help the community’s decision making, to protect and improve the environment, and to understand the linkages between economic, social and environmental decisions.

We regulate a wide range of business, government and individual activities to protect the environment using a variety of tools including licensing and market-based instruments, according to the risk these activities pose to the environment, human health or Aboriginal cultural heritage.

DECCW works in partnership with people in government, business and the community, including Catchment Management Authorities, to develop and deliver sustainable environmental and conservation solutions.

We respect Aboriginal culture, both traditional and contemporary, and the special relationship that Aboriginal people have with Country. We seek to incorporate their knowledge, insights, values and involvement in our efforts to conserve and protect the environment.
DECCW manages an area of over eight percent of NSW for conservation, education and public enjoyment in national parks and reserves. We provide facilities and services to encourage the use of parks and reserves for regional development, sustainable recreation, tourism, education and scientific purposes.

We also develop new policies and contribute information to public debate about solutions to environmental and conservation problems. We research, monitor, evaluate and report and deliver best available scientific information to support environmental and cultural heritage policy, regulation and conservation objectives.

**How is DECCW set up?**

**Key areas of DECCW’s work**

- overseeing the delivery of climate change adaptation and greenhouse gas reduction policies and programs and energy efficiency programs for NSW, which involve communities, local councils, and business and government agencies working together to minimise the impacts of climate change
• improving and regulating in areas such as air and water quality, noise control, waste, dangerous goods, contaminated sites, forestry, chemicals and radiation
• regulating activities that impact on Aboriginal cultural heritage through protection of Aboriginal objects and declaring Aboriginal Places within national parks
• encouraging sustainability through environmental education, reducing or more efficiently using resources including energy and water, increasing recycling and improving management of waste
• responding to reports from the public about pollution and environmental harm and providing comprehensive information and advice services
• investigating breaches of environment laws and undertaking enforcement, including prosecutions
• managing NSW protected areas including national parks and reserve areas, marine parks and other aquatic based reserves
• managing Aboriginal and historic heritage sites and buildings which are in national parks and building partnerships with Aboriginal people
• expanding the tourism opportunities and visitor experiences available in our parks and gardens, to boost people’s enjoyment of nature and understanding about conservation as well as their physical and mental health
• protecting our natural resources, by minimising the clearing of native vegetation; improving biodiversity and protecting our unique native animals and plants; and tackling fire, pests and weeds in our national parks and reserves
• helping protect soils and land from degradation or contamination
• working closely with Catchment Management Authorities, local councils and communities to ensure the long term protection, conservation and restoration of coastlines, coastal estuaries and floodplains
• supporting the Botanic Gardens Trust to manage Sydney’s Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain, Mt Annan and Mt Tomah Botanic Gardens and the National Herbarium of NSW
• managing the Environmental Trust, Climate Change and other environmental funding programs.
• planning and developing a policy and regulatory framework for urban water industries and customers including the Metropolitan Water Plan
• facilitating water recycling across New South Wales
• providing leadership, guidance and technical assistance in best-practice management, operation and maintenance for non-metropolitan urban water utilities
• overseeing and monitoring local water utility performance
• developing plans that allocate water to the environment and to users managing and regulating the sharing of water between users through developing water sharing plans, administering water licences, assessing resource availability, allocating available water and monitoring compliance
• developing and implementing water trading rules and liaising with other States and the Commonwealth in interstate water sharing arrangements.

Our NSW State Plan responsibilities

The NSW State Plan is the Government’s long-term plan to deliver to the community results across a range of activities. The State Plan helps shape DECCW’s work as we have significant responsibilities under the plan.

Under the State Plan, DECCW is the lead agency for:
• tackling climate change
• securing sustainable supplied of water and using our water more wisely
• protecting our native vegetation, biodiversity, land, rivers and coastal waterways
• improving air quality
• reducing waste.

DECCW is also contributing to a number of State Plan priorities.

Want to find out more?

For more information on DECCW’s organisation, services and commitments, visit the DECCW website which is rich in information, resources and ideas covering all aspects of the environment, natural resources, national parks and climate change.

www.environment.nsw.gov.au