

Dear Minister

The Lower Macquarie Water Utilities Alliance (the Alliance) was established in July 2008 by the signing of a cooperative Deed of Agreement by the Councils of Dubbo City, Bogan, Cobar, Narromine, Warren and Wellington Shires. Brewarrina and Bourke Shire Councils subsequently joined the Alliance in May 2009.

The objectives of the Alliance were to implement:

- resources and staff skill sharing;
- · water resource sharing opportunities;
- peer review of performance and mentoring;
- shared best practice strategies;
- · funding of best practice strategies and goals;

to ensure the sustainable delivery of water supply and sewerage service to our communities

We believe that our Alliance has demonstrated both innovation and best practice principles as follows of:

- Achievement of 95% overall compliance with Best Practice requirements (from a base of 73% in 2008).
- Successful applications for grants totaling \$451,800 from DEWHA, under the strengthening Basin Communities Program; to develop regional strategies.
- Completion of the following Regional Strategic Plans:
 - IWCM (Evaluation Study)
 - Demand Management Plan for each Council and a Regional Demand Management Plan
 - Drought Management Plan for each Council and a Regional Drought Management Plan.
 - Drinking Water Quality Management Plan for each Council
 - Storm water Harvesting Strategy
 - Regional IWCM
- Collaborative completion of annual Performance Reports.
- Formation of two working Groups: the Works Officers and Supervisors Group and the Compliance and Statutory Reporting Group.
- Submissions on water reforms to:
 - Infrastructure Australia
 - The Productivity Commission
 - The National Water Commission.
 - Infrastructure NSW.
- Completed development of a Regional Resource Sharing, Mentoring and Training Program (in June 2011).
- Completed audits of all Alliance members Water Treatment and Sewage Treatment Plants (HWA).

The benefits of the Alliance are:

- It provides opportunities to pool resources reduce duplication and form a common platform to develop initiatives.
- It enables development of staff, including knowledge and resource sharing.
- It provides a uniformity of approach to resource management.
- It ensures cost effective delivery of Best Practice.
- It delivers cost savings by buying consultancy services in bulk (e.g. completion of IWCM, Demand Management and Drought Plans for \$217,000 <\$10,000 per member Council per strategy reduced to <\$1,000 per LWU per strategy with the SBC Grant).
- It ensures maintenance of community ownership and involvement.
- It provides regional integration, in the true sense of the word.

Beneficiaries of our Alliance are:

- Our communities:
 - by the delivery of sound, cost effective water supply and sewerage services
 - by ensuring that water supply to all communities within our jurisdiction are provided with a water supply which fully complies with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines
 - by ensuring that service delivery is retained under the control of our Local Government Councils.
- Our Staff
 - by the development and funding of training and staff development programs, and
- by facilitating the sharing of skills, expertise and resources across the region.
- The Environment
 - by maximising the efficient use of the water resources
 - by implementing best practice wastewater treatment technology and maximising the reuse of effluent, and
 - by promoting the concept of storm water harvesting and reuse across the region.

We have also formed strong partnerships with:

- the NSW Office Of Water
- NSW Health
- NSW EPA
- Orana Regional Organisation of Councils

to ensure that regional issues are not only identified, but also addressed in cost effective ways.

This is a whole-of-catchment model which embraces the key issues of water resource management, public health and environmental responsibility, with the principal aim of ensuring that our communities receive the highest levels of service possible.

The Lower Macquarie Water Utilities Alliance is an outstanding example of regional collaboration involving eight (8) local government owned water utilities in the western region of New South Wales.

