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# Annual Report

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2021-22 – Watertrust's first year



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# CEO reflections

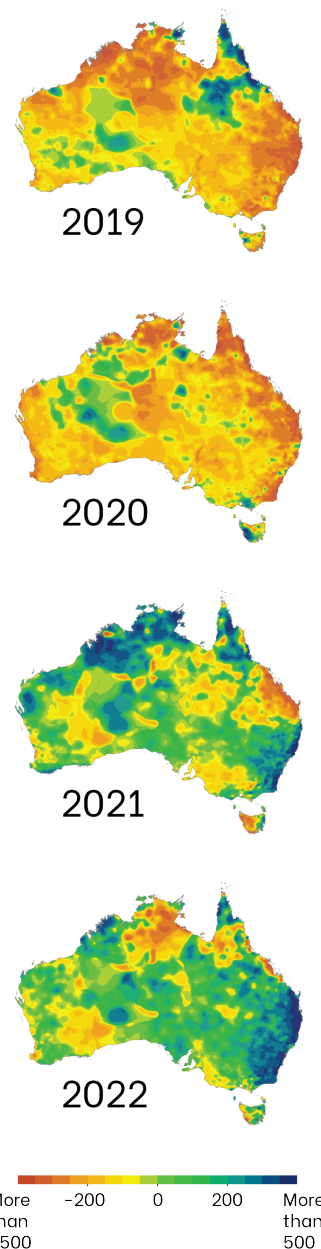
Since delivering our establishment report to funders (September 2021), a new Federal Government has taken office, opening new possibilities for Watertrust Australia in important areas. The new Government's focus on increasing stakeholder participation in water policy development and implementation, First Nations' water rights, restoring confidence in water markets, and updating the science to support policy are all of significant strategic interest to us.

Continued *La Niña* conditions mean storages across much of the country are near capacity, and Murray-Darling flows into South Australia have reached six-year highs. These conditions contrast with far drier previous years (see Figure 1). While increased flows have reduced tensions in some water policy debates, the evidence of very large reductions in water yield in southern catchments over the last 20 years - up to 50% in the Murray-Darling Basin by some estimates, and even more in Southwest WA - is inescapable (see Figure 2). These changes, and the key findings of the most recent [State of the Environment](#) report, underscore the enormity, difficulty and urgency of our work.

Our engagements over the past year continued to reveal broad support across the water and catchment sector for Watertrust's mission. Our unique asset of pooled philanthropic capital aligned on a single mission is a key factor in that support. We have encountered deep appreciation for the value that an independent, philanthropically-funded organisation focused on processes of decision-making can provide. Strategic engagement across the sector over the last year has also helped build our profile so that meetings are no longer predominantly at our initiation, but have shifted to 'demand pull' from a wide range of key government officials, industry leaders, peak bodies, and other water and catchment interests.

We have been able to rapidly establish productive working relationships with the office of the new environment and water minister, Tanya Plibersek, because of groundwork laid over the past year. I was invited to attend her 'State of the Environment' address on 19 July at the National Press Club, where she emphasised the importance of consultation, and working constructively with states and territories. We have also continued to engage with her office and with the senior officials leading a new water reform taskforce.

While the Federal Government's policy platform includes delivering on water commitments, the Minister noted that achieving the 450GL for South Australia is "virtually impossible", despite \$1.3 billion being available and unspent. The release of the [Second Review of the Water for the Environment Special Account \(WESA\)](#) prefigured the Minister's comments, finding that under current settings it is not possible to reach the 450GL target, even if WESA's time and budget limits were removed.



**Figure 1: Rainfall anomaly 2019-2022FY (mm) compared to the 1961-1990 base period.**

The Federal Government’s focus on restoring transparency, integrity and confidence in water markets and water management also presents opportunity for Watertrust. Daryl Quinlivan AO is overseeing the development of an implementation roadmap for Murray–Darling Basin water market reform based on work completed by the ACCC last year. His December advice is available [online](#), and his final roadmap will soon be made public.

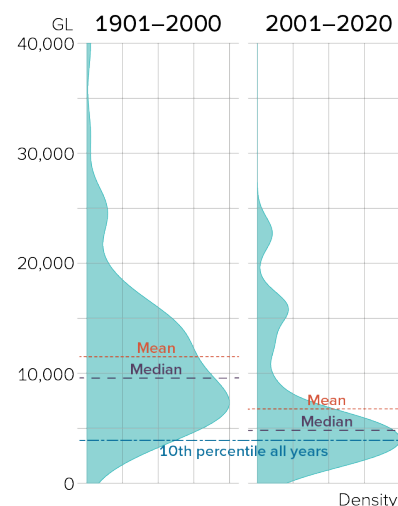
The Murray–Darling Basin Authority’s (MDBA) mid-year [Report Card](#) on the roll-out of the Basin Plan reiterates the unfinished business of the country’s most significant water reform. Major projects at high or very high risk of delay include NSW water resource plans and the sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism (both efficiency measures and supply and constraints measures). Given the Federal Government’s prioritisation of community-centred ‘bottom up’ approaches to policymaking, we have been approached about possible roles for Watertrust in each of these areas.

While developments at the Federal and Murray–Darling Basin level are important for our work, we have not let this narrow our field of vision, and we continue regular dialogue with stakeholders outside the Basin, particularly in the Northern Territory as the NT Government finalises its Strategic Water Plan, due for release later this year, and as pressures for water development intensify across the north.

I am pleased that Watertrust is now fully established as a new charitable organisation, incubated at the Australian Academy of Science. I am grateful to the Academy, which has provided the support of its communications team and extensive expert networks as well as an effective corporate services team that provide our ICT, finance and human resources services. This allows us to focus our budget on delivery priorities. I must also thank law firm Gilbert + Tobin, which has provided considerable *pro bono* assistance in our establishment including supporting our application for Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status.

Our governance arrangements are settled and we are fortunate to have a Board, Influence Advisory Committee and Expert Advisory Panel of eminent individuals who provide authority, guidance, and access to networks, and who generously give their time *pro bono* in support of our mission. Our Strategic Plan was developed with their close engagement, and was endorsed by our Board in July 2022.

An important milestone for us was our first annual gathering of the ‘Watertrust family’ on 25–26 August 2022. Our Board, Influence Advisory Committee, Expert Advisory Panel, and staff met virtually over two days to undertake joint work to test our strategy and refine our project assessment approach and design criteria in the context of our Strategic Plan. The workshops provided an opportunity for our Board and Advisory Bodies to help challenge, broaden and strengthen our thinking and contribute to our Annual Operating Plan and Evaluation Plan. Sir Peter Gluckman ONZ FRS, the President of the International Sciences Council,\* provided an opening and closing address and participated in our workshops providing invaluable observations and advice. Sir Peter is also Director of Koi Tū, The Centre for Informed Futures at the University of Auckland, and the Centre’s work is well-aligned to that of Watertrust.



**Figure 2: Change in the distribution of River Murray inflows.** Median inflows in the 2001–2020 period are almost half those of 1901–2000 and the majority of the 10% of lowest inflows for the entire period occur between 2001–2020.

\* The [International Science Council](#) brings together over 200 international scientific unions and associations as well as national and regional scientific organizations including academies and research councils.



## CEO reflections

Our team continues to grow, enabling us to accelerate project development and execution. While not embracing a fully distributed workforce model, we are building a robust capacity in Canberra, complemented by key talent in the regions – indicatively Adelaide (covering southern Basin), Darwin (covering northern Australia) and Central Queensland (covering the northern Basin and Great Barrier Reef). While our final staff complement will likely be around 10, we will need to harness considerably more capacity and capability to meet the demands of the sector. We will work with expanded bespoke teams of partners brought in for specific projects. Over the past year, we have built relationships with a wide range of potential partners including deliberative practitioners, former senior officials and politicians, community leaders, engagement specialists, data analysts, Indigenous leaders and water and catchment managers and experts.

As I approach my first anniversary in role, I am pleased with the progress we have made, and excited by what lies ahead. I am particularly appreciative of the hard work of my colleagues Rod Marsh, Amanda Wealands and Lisa Stephan and feel fortunate to be part of such a dedicated team.

I commend this first *Annual Report* to you and look forward to meeting you all at our Funders' briefing on 22 September 2022.



**Nick Austin**  
CEO Watertrust Australia Ltd

# Strategy on a page

**Mission** To **improve** water and catchment policy decision-making in Australia.

**Vision** Water and catchment policy and management decisions that citizens and decision-makers see as fairer, more reasonable, more consistent with the available evidence, and more legitimate.

## Our goals

1

Demonstrate innovative ways to blend deliberation, evidence, analysis, policy and politics.

2

Improve deliberative engagement in decision-making across the policy cycle.

3

Build demand for better and more inclusive decision-making processes.

4

Increase understanding of available evidence and its role in informing better decisions.



## Our work

We **discover**, **deliver** and **catalyse demand** for approaches to decision-making capable of improving the way water and catchment decisions are made in Australia. We work in the following four ways.



**Work with proven deliberative methods** to increase authentic, inclusive and consequential engagement and deliberation across the policy cycle.



**Convene inclusive policy dialogues and forums** on difficult policy issues to reframe policy deadlocks, explore multiple perspectives, and identify implementable outcomes.



**Synthesise evidence to make it accessible and communicate uncertainties** to reveal the issues that require deep deliberation.



**Engage with the institutions that manage Australia's waters and catchments** to increase their capacity for effective deliberation.



## Our Values

Independence and authenticity

Agility and tenacity

Collaboration and inclusivity

Humility and learning

Honesty and integrity

Transparency and accountability

# Progress to date

Watertrust Australia has been fully established as a new organisation over the last year. We have completed our establishment goals on time, established our governance structures, and finalised our incubation arrangements at the Australian Academy of Science. Delivery of our sector engagement plan has built on the relationships established during Watertrust's research and design phase. We have also completed our Strategic Plan and begun project work. We are in the process of expanding our team, from four to eight and anticipate appointments over the next month.

This section outlines our progress over the last year. It covers how we have acquitted our establishment goals as well as our work on sector engagement and our first projects.

## Acquitting our establishment goals

Over our first year of operation, we have met our establishment goals and their accompanying key performance indicators (KPIs) on time. Establishment goals and KPIs with longer timeframes are progressing well. Progress on our five establishment goals and KPIs is summarised below and in Table 1.

- 1. Organisation and governance:** All six KPIs for this goal have been met. Independent governance arrangements have been established and are supporting Watertrust's operations; Watertrust has been established as an independent charitable entity with Deductible Gift Recipient status; we have completed our brand strategy and launched our website, which is being upgraded to deliver greater functionality and will launch end-September 2022.
- 2. Fundraising:** With the support of our major funders and board, we are on track to meet this goal by December 2024. We have continued to engage with funders, as well as potential funders like Minderoo Foundation which has committed \$2 million subject to identifying mutually-agreed project opportunities.
- 3. Strategy, evaluation framework and advisory bodies:** We are on track to achieve all four KPIs for this goal by December 2022. Our Board endorsed our Strategic Plan, including updated goals for progress reporting, in July 2022. We have appointed our two advisory bodies and work on our evaluation framework, due in December 2022, is well underway.
- 4. Program of works:** We began work on two foundational projects in May 2022. The first is on equity in water policy; the second on

### Reporting on progress

Funders agreed that Watertrust will submit an annual written progress report each year from 2022, which will report against agreed goals and key performance indicators (KPIs), and include financial statements. Funders agreed a set of establishment goals and KPIs for Watertrust, which will be replaced by an ongoing set of goals from July 2022.

Towards the end of the first five years of Watertrust's operation a formal external evaluation will be undertaken, which will inform each funder's considerations of support for the subsequent five years of operation (depending on funder commitments).

identifying the evidence needed to support our deliberative work. Our engagement with the water and catchment sector has revealed more potential projects than we have capacity to respond to and a process for short-listing projects for co-design and delivery is underway.

**5. Sector engagement:** This is an ongoing goal that will always be critical for Watertrust. Our sector engagement over the last year has been extensive and is detailed further below.

**Table 1: Achievement of establishment goals and KPIs**

<b>KPI</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>1.1 Appointment of Watertrust’s Chair and CEO by July 2021</b>	Kathryn Fagg AO appointed Chair in November 2020; Nick Austin appointed CEO on 28 April 2021, began in role 24 September 2021.	<b>Complete</b>
<b>1.2 Led by the Chair, appointment of remainder of the Board by December 2021</b>	Board appointed (and has met in November 2021, February 2022, May 2022 and August 2022).	<b>Complete</b>
<b>1.3 Establish Watertrust Australia Ltd as an independent charitable entity.</b>	Watertrust Australia Ltd was incorporated and registered as a charity effective 14 March 2021 and Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) endorsement effective 1 February 2022.	<b>Complete</b>
<b>1.4 Develop a branding strategy</b>	The brand strategy developed by ThinkHQ was finalised in October 2021. Trademarks have been registered by Gilbert + Tobin.	<b>Complete</b>
<b>1.5 Create and launch a website</b>	Our first website was built in parallel with the brand strategy (using an agile development approach) and launched on 1 July 2021. An updated website with improved functionality to share richer insights with users will be released end-September 2022. See <a href="http://watertrustaustralia.org.au">watertrustaustralia.org.au</a>	<b>Complete</b>
<b>1.6 Finalise incubation arrangements at the Australian Academy of Science by December 2021.</b>	Our first incubation arrangements were finalised in December 2021. We refreshed our agreement with reference to our first year’s experience with a new Service Level Agreement on 30 June 2022. The Academy and Gilbert + Tobin have also assisted us establish operational aspects of the organisation (e.g. financial management system, IT, policies, legal).	<b>Complete</b>
<b>2.1 Achieve the minimum target of \$35 million total funds committed by 30 June 2024.</b>	\$31.5 million raised from 16 funders by 31 December 2020. An additional \$2 million has been committed by the Minderoo Foundation for projects in the 2022 and 2023 financial years subject to mutually agreed project opportunities being identified and developed. In partnership with the board and executive, the major funders continue to identify and consult with additional prospective funders to ensure that Watertrust will achieve its target of \$35 million by December 2024.	<b>Progressing to timeframe</b>
<b>3.1 Update Watertrust’s goals to encompass the move from establishment phase to programmatic work</b>	The Strategic Plan has updated goals that reflect the shift from establishment to delivery.	<b>Complete</b>
<b>3.2 Develop a strategic plan, approved by the Board by July 2022</b>	The Board reviewed the draft strategic plan in May 2022 and endorsed the plan in July 2022.	<b>Complete</b>

*Continued on next page...*



**Table 1: Achievement of establishment goals and KPIs**

KPI	Comment	Status
<b>3.3 Appoint an Influence Advisory Committee and an Expert Advisory Panel with appropriate Board-approved Terms of Reference by December 2021</b>	Advisory bodies appointed and charters for the Committees approved by the Board in November 2021; Influence Advisory Committee and Expert Advisory Panel members have received a formal induction and these two advisory bodies are engaged in Watertrust’s work.	<b>Complete</b>
<b>3.4 Develop an evaluation framework by December 2022, to be reported against each subsequent year</b>	Development of our evaluation framework has begun and will be taken to our Board for review at its November 2022 meeting. We have an evaluation expert on staff and external support will also be engaged for this task if required.	<b>Progressing to timeframe</b>
<b>4.1 Delivery against the scheduled program of works</b>	An initial program of works has been developed in parallel with the strategic plan and was presented in draft form to our Board in August 2022. The program will be finalised at our November 2022 Board meeting. Two foundational projects have already begun and we expect to begin a series of other activities shortly, once we have finalised the establishment of an authorising environment with the Federal Government.	<b>Progressing to timeframe</b>
<b>5.1 Demonstrated engagement with communities, experts, governments (local, state and Commonwealth) and other stakeholders as required to deliver against the program of works</b>	A major focus of effort has been deepening existing relationships and establishing new relationships with institutional actors of direct or potential consequence for our work, and for water and catchment policy decisions more broadly. In parallel, we have commenced a process of systematically mapping institutions across the landscape of our current and future work.	<b>Ongoing</b>



# Building relationships across the water and catchment sector

During the last year, our priorities have been on building the relationships and knowledge on which our credibility and legitimacy depend. A priority focus of our efforts over this last year has been to establish the respect and convening power across the water and catchment sector that will enable our work.

## Sector engagement

In September 2021, we commenced a process of systematic mapping of organisations, institutions and key stakeholders. This work built on and extended relationships established during the research and design phase, and has defined our engagement strategy.

Our engagement with a wide range of communities, experts, NGOs, First Nations, industry bodies, government officials and other stakeholders has contributed to building knowledge and trust required for establishing the authorising environments for our work. Our Chair, Kathryn Fagg AO, has been involved in high-level meetings with a number of key government stakeholders and has assisted our engagement with CSIRO (where she is also Chair).

We have engaged with peak and sectoral bodies, including the National Irrigators' Council, NSW Irrigators' Council, North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance Ltd (NAILSMA), National Farmers Federation (NFF); with environmental organisations including the Environmental Defenders Office (EDO), the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists, Environmental Justice Australia (EJA); leadership organisations including the Peter Cullen Water and Environment Trust and the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation.

We have established positive relationships with Commonwealth water agencies, including the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), Geoscience Australia (GA), the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA), the Australian Climate Service (ACS), the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office (CEWO) and the Productivity Commission. We have also engaged with relevant researchers, including at CSIRO, Goyder Institute for Water Research, the Australian National University (ANU), Griffith University, the University of Melbourne, the University of Western Australia, James Cook University, and the University of Canberra (UC). We have also established connections with state and territory departments, agencies and researchers. Since the recent Federal election, we have established relationships with the new environment and water Minister's office. Key senior officials at the former Department of Agriculture Water and Environment have transitioned to a new water policy reform taskforce and we maintain good relationships with the taskforce leadership.

**Table 2: Meetings held with sector 2022FY**

Sector	Meetings
Government	63
Not-for-profit	65
Industry	21
Funders	32
First Nations	22
Practitioners	26



### Formalising relationships and collaborations

We have formal, third-party partnerships in place with two new Cooperative Research Centres: the OneBasin CRC focused on productive, resilient and sustainable irrigation regions in the Murray-Darling Basin and the CRC SAAFE – Solving Antimicrobial Resistance in Agribusiness, Food and Environments – in which water is a critical consideration. We have explored links with the Resilient Landscapes Hub (NESP) as they begin the co-design process for their program and the CRC for Northern Australia, which is also likely to be a future delivery partner.

### Delivering our early projects

We have commenced two foundational projects that will underpin much of our future work:

- identification of data sources to support deliberation; this work will be continued in our **synthesising evidence** workstream
- development of a framework for understanding equity, fairness and justice in water and catchment policy and management.

Lessons from these early projects have informed the design of our workstreams and our ongoing program of work (as elaborated further below).

## Building our organisation

Executing on our mission requires the expertise, authority, political nous, and community outreach to catalyse transformative policy reform. Our team must be able to remain independent, avoid early judgement and stay open to multiple perspectives in highly contested, values-driven policy domains, plus have a solid track record of project delivery and management. We require skilled mediators, and knowledgeable and independent facilitators of policy change able to engage stakeholders and experts in the design of practical policy solutions. We must be able to engage our stakeholders in a clear and consistent way, and act with honesty, humility, optimism, impartiality, and rigour.

### Staffing and organisational capacity

Our staffing plan is for a lean (not more than 10 FTE) and nimble workforce. We intend to strengthen our staff complement in Canberra and place key staff in priority regions: Adelaide (covering southern Basin); Darwin (covering northern Australia); and Central Queensland (covering northern Basin, Reef).

We already have in place a CEO; Director, Strategy and Programs; Principal (on secondment, 0.6 FTE) and a part-time (0.5 FTE) Executive Assistant. We are well-advanced in the process of

#### Incubation arrangements

Being incubated at the Australian Academy of Science not only affords us access to the Academy's unparalleled convening power, reputation for independence, large and experienced communications team, and extensive networks of subject matter experts, it provides us corporate (information technology, finance, human resources) support under a Service Level Agreement. This allows us to focus our recruitment on delivery priorities.

recruiting a small number – targeting four – additional senior managers and are on track to meet our objective of attracting the very best talent that reflects the diversity of the domains and geographies that Watertrust will work across. We will launch a subsequent recruitment process to engage less senior staff with relevant analytical and/or facilitation expertise. In addition, we are partnering with other individuals and organisations to engage relevant expertise on a time-limited, project-by-project basis, striking an appropriate balance between in-house and contracted capability.

## Evaluation framework

Our mission presents novel challenges for evaluation. The ambition for systemic change requires the development of robust indicators for the impact of work across the policy cycle, in institutions with policy mandates, and more broadly among those whom these institutions serve. The evaluation framework must be able to identify and measure our contribution to outcomes that will arise from the work of multiple actors in complex contexts.

The evaluation framework will be delivered by December 2022. Like the strategy, the evaluation framework will adapt as we learn and course-correct. We have already embedded evaluation into our program design, delivery and budgets as well as engaged an evaluation expert who contributed to our strategy design and will lead our work on finalising the framework, which will guide us towards our five-year evaluation and ensure we gather appropriate performance data along the way.

Our evaluation framework will have a focus across three horizons:

- 1.** ongoing program evaluation that allows for learning and feedback in a new endeavour as well as annual reporting to funders
- 2.** an extensive evaluation at the half-way mark, which unlocks the second five-year tranche of funding
- 3.** a major review as we approach the ten-year mark focused on our impact on the water and catchment policy decision-making system.







# What we have learned

Our work over the last year and our extensive engagement with the water and catchment management sector continue to validate the results of the research and design phase leading to Watertrust's establishment. There is strong agreement across the sector about the value of an independent, philanthropically-funded organisation focused on the processes of decision-making.

At the same time, stakeholders from across the sector have noted that as a new organisation with no track record or formal mandate, our ability to have impact will rely entirely on our ability to establish "authorising environments" for our work. This means acceptance by the majority of stakeholders and by governments that Watertrust's engagement in a particular policy issue will add value.


## Building trust is essential

Consequently, trust and credibility are our rate-limiting factors. Our success will depend on our ability to build trust among all stakeholders for our role as an "honest broker" in longstanding and contentious water policy debates. In this context, our Board has agreed that we must "hasten slowly" to build the trust needed to operate effectively. Trust in a new organisation and its leadership is created slowly, but can be lost in an instant.

Our focused engagement work over the last year has proven the benefit of this approach. We have quietly built our profile so that we are now experiencing a "demand pull" for action and engagement from a wide range of key government officials, industry leaders and other water and catchment interests. We have been offered privileged access to senior policy makers, the internal policy deliberations of a new government, and data not available to others. We are now well-positioned to build on the momentum we have established over the last year.

## Co-design builds trust

Communities and stakeholders feel alienated from processes that demand deference to policy decisions made elsewhere. Structural elements in the business-as-usual system incentivise a style of advocacy that magnifies polarised voices and aims to keep organisations and activities in the public eye. Building the trust across the water and catchments sector required to deliver our mission requires a co-design approach. However, we will need to manage the tensions that arise between maintaining our independence and ensuring inclusive collaboration and deliberation.

 Trust and credibility are our rate-limiting factors.

## What we have learned


The context in which we work requires us to co-design our work with others to build trust, yet not be captured by the positions they take. We will only create effective authorising environments for our work through inclusive dialogue with the sector as we identify the challenges we work on, the approaches we adopt and the timeframes for delivery. Our program design must be agile and adaptive in order to respond effectively to contexts that are likely to be messy and unpredictable.

## Selecting projects requires consideration of the longer term

Over the last year, we have identified and been presented with numerous, diverse potential projects across Australia. Our stakeholders see that we occupy a unique role in an Australian water policy landscape dominated by deep division, partisan politics and contested evidence. We meet a need, arising from a shared frustration with the status quo, for new approaches to water and catchment policy and management decision-making.

However, we are introducing a new approach to policy and decision-making into a sector that to date has tended to engage in limited and constrained forms of public participation. As a new organisation entering a highly-contested space with low levels of trust, our first project choices are critically important. Early enthusiasm and misjudged action could undermine our entire enterprise.

We will begin with more constrained or limited policy challenges to build relationships and trust in our work. We have identified a set of policy issues not so difficult and complex as to be beyond our capability to influence change but that remain sufficiently challenging to justify our engagement and help demonstrate the benefits of a focus on decision-making. Over time, we will progress through more difficult challenges, while keeping an eye on the long-term goal of improving water and catchment decision-making across Australia. These will be the “Goldilocks” problems that are neither too easy nor too hard for any particular stage in our development as an organisation. Policy issues that can be approached as a set of modular challenges are ideal – that is issues or policy decisions that can be ordered and approached as a set of increasingly ambitious projects.



We meet a need,  
arising from a shared  
frustration with the  
status quo.





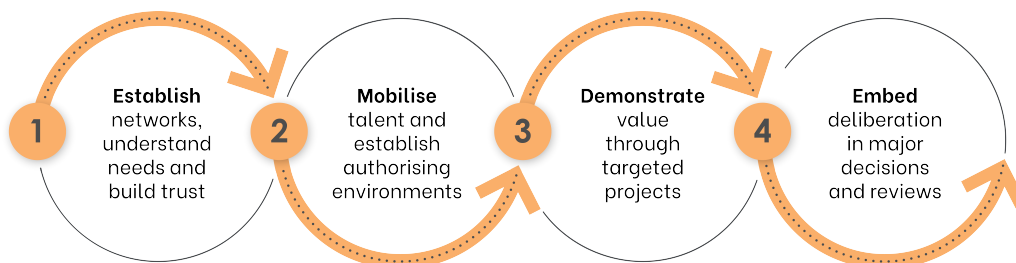


# The year ahead

The year ahead will see us build momentum on the foundations we have laid over the past year. Our annual program of works is designed to contribute to our strategic goals, as described in our Strategic Plan. The program describes our proposed activities (organised by four workstreams); how we apply the criteria for identifying if a project or topic area is worthwhile pursuing; what we will need to consider in co-design; the key relationships and partners; and our budget allocation.

## Scaling up our approaches for impact

We are introducing a set of approaches to decision-making not widely used across the water and catchment management sector in Australia. Our long-term aim is to mainstream greater deliberation and stakeholder engagement across the policy cycle. However, our initial objectives are to introduce deliberative approaches, increase knowledge and understanding about where they are best deployed, improve recognition of their benefits, and boost confidence in their use (see Figure 3).



**Figure 3: Steps to introduce new approaches to decision-making**

Our sector engagement and relationship building has begun this journey. The networks we have established assist in establishing the authorising environments that enable us to mobilise talent and resources, demonstrate value through targeted projects, and embed deliberation in major decisions and reviews. By year five, we aim to show meaningful adoption of processes we have modelled at Commonwealth, state and agency level.

To achieve our five-year goal we will need to repeat this process over time and across jurisdictions. Each of our workstreams will use and adapt these steps. Our workstreams are described in more detail below.

 We aim to show meaningful adoption of processes we have modelled at Commonwealth, state and agency level.

## Our areas of work

In the year ahead, our work program will be focused on four workstreams (Figure 4):

- **Work with proven deliberative methods** to increase authentic, inclusive and consequential engagement across the policy cycle
- **Convene inclusive policy dialogues and forums** on difficult issues to re-frame policy deadlocks, explore multiple perspectives, and identify implementable outcomes
- **Synthesise evidence**, make it accessible and communicate uncertainties to reveal the issues that require deep deliberation
- **Engage with the institutions that manage Australia’s waters and catchments** to increase their capacity for effective deliberation.

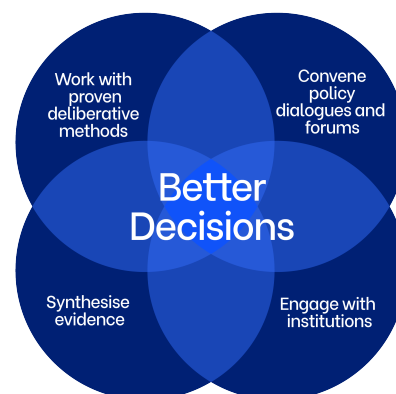


Figure 4: Our workstreams

We have a number of active and potential projects or engagements. While the projects are delivered under a primary workstream, they typically comprise activities across multiple workstreams. For example, deliberative processes and policy dialogues will often be supported by evidence synthesis work. Our focus on processes of decision-making rather than predetermined outcomes is designed to influence others and be integrated with existing policy processes for water and catchment governance and management over time.

Short-listing of opportunities uses the assessment criteria outlined in our Strategic Plan. Prioritised opportunities will proceed to a co-design phase for further exploration with partners and key stakeholders using the design criteria for each workstream (recognising that some opportunities will fall across multiple workstreams).



## Workstream 1: Work with proven deliberative methods

Communities and stakeholders feel alienated from processes that demand deference to policy decisions made elsewhere. Decision-makers find engaging effectively with stakeholders and communities difficult. Multiple institutional attempts at public participation in policymaking have led communities to feel 'over-consulted and under listened to'. This workstream works with deliberative methods to increase authentic, inclusive and consequential engagement across the policy cycle from issue formulation to policy implementation.<sup>1</sup>

### Designing for effective deliberation

We will draw on a wide range of deliberative approaches to re-engage communities and stakeholders in the policy process. Drawing on multiple proven approaches to deliberation<sup>†</sup>, we tailor our work to the context and issues we work on.


We recognise the need to embed deliberative events *into* broader processes of engagement between stakeholders themselves and between stakeholders and policymakers. We do not offer panaceas and we don't see ourselves as purveyors of individual deliberative events because we do not see them as reducing democratic deficits or improve decision-making in isolation.

In this workstream we collaborate with policymakers and stakeholders to identify issues with deliberative potential and an authorising environment that can incorporate independently-convened deliberation.

### Laying the foundations for delivery of deliberative methods in the year ahead

We have engaged with leaders across the sector to raise awareness of Watertrust and the value of independently-convened deliberative approaches. In the year ahead we will progress our short-listed project opportunities by building authorising environments through co-design with policymakers and stakeholders.

In addition to our on-the-ground activities, we have explored and initiated work with the University of Canberra to develop a framework for assessing deliberative potential. This work will ensure that we target our activities to areas of highest impact and system change.

 Workstream 1 works with deliberative methods to increase authentic, inclusive and consequential engagement across the policy cycle from issue formulation to policy implementation.

<sup>†</sup> **Deliberation** is discussion and debate that involves weighing and reflecting on evidence, preferences, values, and interests regarding matters of common concern. A good deliberative process can have a variety of outcomes, and providing a space for structured disagreement that clarifies conflict is more important than aiming at consensus. Deliberation need not be public. An environment in which participants can speak freely is crucial to good deliberation. Sometimes the quality of deliberation may be inversely proportional to the degree of public attention.

## Workstream 2: Convene inclusive policy dialogues and forums

Our engagement with the water and catchment management sector over the last year has revealed strong interest in Watertrust convening policy dialogues on a range of issues. This interest arises from a frustration with the status quo, recognition of the need for bridges across institutional silos, acknowledgement of a dearth of spaces for cross-jurisdictional knowledge sharing and collaboration, and an appreciation of the value of an independent convenor.

### Using our convening power for long-term impact

We aim to build on Watertrust's independent convening power to work outside traditional institutional structures to improve dialogue and coordination between different actors in the water and catchment policy space. Business-as-usual incentives drive a style of advocacy that magnifies polarised voices. Our work is designed to contribute to finding better ways to balance the interests of governments, First Nations, agriculture, the environment, communities and other interests.

We work with policymakers and stakeholders to identify policy issues for potential dialogues where complex, values-based dilemmas cause conflicts and policy deadlocks, and an alternative means of achieving a satisfactory result are blocked.

Our activity in this workstream aims to bring diverse interests to the table to focus on a policy issue of common interest. We provide the opportunity for participants to engage with available evidence and alter perspectives, and allow multiple voices to be heard and contribute to mutual understanding of different perspectives. Through the forums and dialogues we identify areas of disagreement and agreement and explore the potential for finding common ground for practical next steps that could influence policy outcomes.

### Co-designing upcoming dialogues and forums

Our sector engagement to date has highlighted the utility of and a desire to participate in independently convened policy forums. Our research and consultation has identified a range of approaches to convening forums and dialogues. There are many approaches that can be applied by Watertrust and selecting the most suitable technique will be important to the overall forum achieving its aim.

A long list of topics for forums and dialogues has been developed and is currently being refined in consultation with water policy experts and the wider sector.

 Workstream 2 focuses on convening forums, roundtables and dialogues to bring together policymakers and diverse stakeholders to deliberate on policy issues.



## Workstream 3: Synthesise evidence

Water and catchment policy can be technically and politically complex. Technical experts cannot anticipate the range of legitimate perspectives or adjudicate the values conflicts that drive disputes over water policy.<sup>2</sup> Partial presentation of available evidence is too often used to argue for particular policy options and close down further debate. We want to increase policymaker and stakeholder demand for evidence to inform open policy deliberation.

### Opening out the policy options through better access to the available evidence


We evaluate available evidence, assess knowledge gaps and communicate uncertainties to demonstrate how available evidence can inform different framings of policy issues, alter the evaluation of policy options, and reveal key issues requiring deliberation. We engage with experts to help produce independent evidence syntheses that stakeholders can use to examine their own thinking and better understand other perspectives.

We will evaluate, synthesise and make publicly-accessible evidence for policy dilemmas where good decisions require engaging with a wide range of stakeholders and complex evidence sources, and that evidence is uncertain, incomplete or disputed. We recognise and seek to address the cognitive biases<sup>†</sup> that complicate discussion and deliberation of issues.

### Data-informed narratives in development

Building on our initial landscape data stocktake completed in 2021, we have commissioned scoping of a set of compelling evidence-informed narratives. Development of narratives will involve:

- targeting our work to the problem and intended audience and use technology effectively to extend our reach
- collaborating with end-users to ensure our work is relevant and easily understood (recognising that narratives and the framing they provide are critical to understanding and working with evidence in policy contexts)
- integrating evidence from diverse sources and a range of experts (recognising that impartial experts are “simply those whose interests are uncontroversial or undeclared”)<sup>2</sup>
- testing the strength of available evidence, explain limitations and uncertainties, evaluate levels of consensus, and highlight counter-intuitive results.

 Workstream 3 focuses on evaluating, synthesising and presenting evidence to show the complexity of policy issues and reveal areas for deliberation.


<sup>†</sup>Examples of biases include availability bias, fallacies of composition, baseline shifts, anchoring, confirmation bias, group think, framing, loss aversion and inertia, and cultural cognition.

## Workstream 4: Engage with institutions

A substantial proportion of our work in this workstream is in relationship building and informal discussion. For Watertrust to be effective, the institutions that manage Australia's waters and catchments must see us as a trustworthy organisation. We have undertaken and continue to undertake extensive engagement with organisations and individuals from across the water and catchment sector around Australia.

We have already experienced the benefits of our relationship building over the last year with several opportunities for projects being raised by institutions across Australia and access provided to data that are not usually shared with non-governmental organisations. We aim to build relationships that increase the potential for institutions and policymakers to call on us for informal advice on a regular basis as well as more formal engagements to assist in resolving policy deadlocks or better integrating stakeholder deliberation and independent evidence synthesis across the policy cycle.

This foundational workstream underpins our other work and is an ongoing activity. With strong and trusting relationships with institutions and major peak bodies Watertrust will be able to engage effectively when policy development is in its early, sensitive stages where the influence of deliberation can be highly effective in achieving alignment across diverse interests.

 Workstream 4 focuses on engaging with the institutions that manage Australia's waters and catchments.



# Appendix 1: Board and Advisory Bodies membership

A summary of the expertise and experience of Watertrust's Board and two advisory bodies - Influence Advisory Committee and Expert Advisory Panel - is provided on the following sections.

## Board members

The Board of Directors provides Watertrust with the independence, authority and knowledge required to govern the organisation and work with all stakeholders.

### **Kathryn Fagg AO | Chair**

Kathryn Fagg AO is a respected and experienced director and chair, with extensive senior commercial and operational leadership experience across a range of industries. Currently, Kathryn is Chair of CSIRO and a Non-Executive Director of both National Australia Bank and Djerrivarrh Investments Limited. In the for-purpose sector, Kathryn is Chair of the Breast Cancer Network Australia, as well as a Director of The Myer Foundation, the Grattan Institute and the Champions of Change Coalition.

She is a former President of Chief Executive Women, a former Chair of Parks Victoria and the Melbourne Recital Centre, and a former Board member of the Australian Centre for Innovation. Kathryn is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering. Kathryn was made an Officer of the Order of Australia in June 2019 for distinguished service to business and finance, to the central banking, logistics and manufacturing sectors, and to women.

### **Martyn Myer AO | Director**

Martyn Myer AO is a prominent Melbourne businessman and philanthropist with over 25 years of experience in executive and non-executive board and chair roles in private and public companies, not-for-profit organisations and philanthropic foundations. Martyn was President of The Myer Foundation from 2009 to 2020 and stepped down as Chairman of Myer Family Investments Pty Ltd in October 2016. From 2004 until 2007, Martyn was President of the Howard Florey Institute of Experimental Physiology and Medicine after serving as Vice-President from 2000 to 2004 and Treasurer from 1992 to 2000. He was a Director of the Florey Neuroscience Institutes from 2007 to 2009.

Martyn was Deputy Chancellor of the University of Melbourne and served on the university's Council from 2009 to 2019. In June 2008, Martyn was appointed an Officer in the Order of Australia for service to business and the community, particularly through contributions to medical research and the establishment of the Florey Neuroscience Institute.

### **Craig Connelly | Director**

Craig Connelly is CEO of The Ian Potter Foundation. Craig is an accomplished financier and businessman, now dedicated to contributing to the community sector. He spent 25 years working in a variety of roles in the Australian financial services sector. A Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants and a Fellow of the Financial Services Institute of Australasia, Craig is an experienced business analyst and successful manager whose professional strengths lie in his research innovation, industry analysis, technical expertise and strong communication skills.

He is a Founding Trustee of the National Parks Conservation Trust and is currently on the board of Sane Australia Limited.

### **Robbie Sefton | Director | Chair Influence Advisory Committee**

Robbie Sefton is Managing Director of Sefton & Associates, a national strategic communications consultancy, and a partner of Nangandie Pastoral Company. Her current board roles include membership of the boards of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, headspace, the CRC for High Performance Soils and the CRC for Smarter Regions. Robbie also sits on the National Farmers' Federation Advisory Group and is a former Deputy Chair of the Australia Day Council and the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation.

Robbie brings extensive experience with rural, regional and remote issues and wide-ranging connections with decision-makers and national leaders. She recently chaired the Panel for the Independent Assessment of Social and Economic Conditions in The Murray-Darling Basin. Robbie chairs Watertrust's Influence Advisory Committee.

### **Prof Rob Vertessey | Director | Chair Expert Advisory Panel**

Rob Vertessey is an Honorary Enterprise Professor (Water Resources) in the School of Engineering, University of Melbourne. He chairs the Great Barrier Reef Restoration Program, the Water and Environment Research Program for the Murray-Darling Basin, and the Committee on Social Economic and Environmental Sciences for the Murray-Darling Basin Authority. In 2019, Rob chaired the Independent Assessment into the Fish Deaths on the Lower Darling River.

Rob was previously CEO and Director of Meteorology at the Bureau of Meteorology, Chief, Land and Water, CSIRO, and Director (CEO) of the CRC for Catchment Hydrology. In addition to his extensive scientific and management experience, Rob has been involved in the research and development of what is now Watertrust since 2018. Rob is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering (ATSE) and immediate past Chair of ATSE's Water Forum. Rob chairs Watertrust's Expert Advisory Panel.

### **Prof Peter Yu AM | Director**

Peter Yu is a Yawuru man from Broome in the Kimberley region in North West Australia with over 40 years' experience in Indigenous development in the Kimberley and at the state, national and international level. Peter was a key negotiator on behalf of the Yawuru Native Title Holders with the Western Australian State Government over the 2010 Yawuru Native Title Agreement. He was recently Chief Executive Officer of the Yawuru Corporate Group and is the current and inaugural Vice-President First Nations at the Australian National University.

He was Executive Director of the Kimberley Land Council during the 1990s and a member of the national leadership team negotiating the Federal Government's response to the 1992 Mabo High Court judgement on Native Title. Peter chairs the Indigenous Reference Group (IRG) to the Northern Ministerial Forum and is Deputy Chair of the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance Ltd (NAILSMA). Peter was awarded an Order of Australia Medal (AM) in 2021 for his services to the Indigenous community.

## Appendix 1: Board and Advisory Bodies membership

### Leith Bouilly | Director

Leith Bouilly is the Independent Chair for the Review of the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan Land Management Targets, Interim Chair of the Water Security CRC bid, and a member of the Australian Water Partnerships Advisory Committee. Leith's previous board roles include being a National Water Commissioner, Chairman of the Community Advisory Committee to the Murray Darling Basin Ministerial Council, Chairman SunWater, Chairman Australian Water Recycling Centre of Excellence, board member, SeqWater, Murrumbidgee Irrigation, CRC Water Sensitive Cities, and a Commissioner, Australian Heritage Commission.

Leith also managed a family pastoral company for 30 years.

### Dr Deb Nias | Director

Deb Nias is CEO of the Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group, a former Director of the International River Foundation and Wetland Care Australia. Deb brings 25 years' experience in natural resource and landscape management in Australia, much of this work has had a substantial focus on engagement with a wide range of stakeholders.

Deb has a PhD in wetland ecology and has led genuine cross-stakeholder engagement with hundreds of landholders, Traditional Owners and Indigenous Corporations, businesses, irrigators, government agencies and other community organisations.

### Tim Gordon | Director

Tim Gordon is a partner in the Corporate Advisory team at Gilbert + Tobin where he advises listed companies and private equity fund managers in relation to mergers and acquisitions, capital raisings, joint ventures, restructurings and regulatory investigations. Tim has extensive experience advising on transactions around critical infrastructure assets including natural resources and agriculture.

Tim is a member of the Law Committee of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, the Securities Law Committee of the International Bar Association and is a regular commentator in the media on corporate governance. Tim has been involved with assisting with the establishment of what is now Watertrust since 2017.

# Influence Advisory Committee members

Watertrust is supported by an Influence Advisory Committee of well-connected and influential thought leaders.

**Table 3: Watertrust Australia Influence Advisory Committee members**

Name	Bio
<b>Phil Duncan</b>	Phil is a member of the Gomeri Nation and an elected representative of the Gomeri Nation Native Title Claimant Group. Throughout his career and volunteer community work, Phil has worked extensively with Indigenous people and government to improve the lives of First Nations people. He provides high-level policy, strategic advice, and leadership to key Indigenous representative organisations, universities, and state and federal government agencies.
<b>Dr Guy Fitzhardinge AM</b>	Guy has extensive land management, business and philanthropic experience. He is currently a Governor of WWF Australia, the Chair of the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAISMA), and previously founding Chair of Karrkad Kanjdji Trust which was established to support the aspirations of the traditional owners of the Djelk IPA and the Warddeken IPA (in west Arnhem Land) in land management and cultural preservation.
<b>Dr Jody Gunn</b>	Jody is CEO of the Australian Land Conservation Alliance and is committed to nature conservation at national and international scales. Her career has included academia, non-government and government organisations, with a Bachelor of Science from the University of Melbourne, Australia and a PhD from Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge, UK.
<b>Hon Karlene Maywald</b>	Karlene has a long-standing track record in water management and is passionate about water reform in Australia. She was appointed Chair of the National Water Commission in 2012, and was a representative in the South Australian House of Assembly from October 1997 until March 2010. From 2004 until 2010, she was South Australia's Minister for Water Security and the River Murray during one of the worst drought periods in living memory.
<b>Prof Rob Skinner AM</b>	Rob is a Professorial Fellow at the Monash Sustainable Development Institute. He is a former Managing Director of Melbourne Water and currently Deputy Chair of Yarra Valley Water and convenor of the Integrated Water Management Forums for the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. He is the former Chair of WaterAid Australia and of WaterAid International, Deputy chair of the CRC for Water sensitive Cities, and director of the International Centre of Excellence for Water Resources Management. He has been recognised as a Distinguished Fellow of the International Water Association.
<b>Steve Whan</b>	Steve is a former NSW Minister and Shadow Minister for Agriculture, along with Emergency Services and a number of other portfolios. He served in the NSW Parliament as Member for Monaro from 2003-2011 and in the Legislative Council from 2011 to 2015. Steve was CEO of the National Irrigators Council for four years to 2021 and is currently an independent non-executive Director of Murrumbidgee Irrigation.
<b>Susan Worley</b>	Susan was the Director of Water Planning at the Western Australian Department of Water and Environmental Regulation until June 2021. In this role she led planning for water supply and environmental water, in the context of climate change, through adaptive management and water allocation planning, water supply and demand outlooks, and investigations to identify options for additional water supplies.



## Expert Advisory Panel members

Watertrust is supported by an Expert Advisory Panel of highly regarded experts in water, catchments and policy areas associated with these.

**Table 4: Watertrust Australia Expert Advisory Panel**

Name	Bio
<b>Prof Snow Barlow</b>	Snow is an Emeritus Professor at the University of Melbourne and has worked in climate change research for more than 30 years beginning with some of the first studies of the impacts of elevated CO2 on forest and crop plant growth and development. He was a chief scientist with the federal Department of Primary Industries and Energy and participated as a member of the Australian delegation for Kyoto Protocol negotiations.
<b>Prof Allan Dale</b>	Allan is a Professor of Tropical Regional Development at The Cairns Institute, James Cook University and the Chief Scientist for the Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia. He is also a University Fellow with Charles Darwin University's Northern Institute and has a strong interest in integrated societal governance, with a particular focus across the tropical world, northern Australia and the Great Barrier Reef.
<b>Prof Katherine Daniell</b>	Katherine is a Professor and transdisciplinary academic at the Australian National University's School of Cybernetics, Fenner School of Environment and Society, and Institute for Water Futures. Trained in engineering, arts and public policy, her work bridges multiple domains including multi-level governance, participatory processes, risk management, sustainability science, river basin management, urban and regional development, politics and cultures of innovation, cybernetics theory and praxis, and international science and technology cooperation.
<b>Prof John Dryzek</b>	John is a Centenary Professor at the Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance at the University of Canberra's Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis. He works in both political theory and empirical social science, and is best known for his contributions in the areas of democratic theory and practice and environmental politics.
<b>Dr Steve Hatfield-Dodds</b>	Steve has worked for more than two decades at the intersection of sustainability research, public policy, and business strategy. He was recently Executive Director of ABARES - the economics and science bureau of the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, and before that led CSIRO's integration science and modelling. Steve was lead author of the Australian National Outlook (2015) and the scenario lead for the UNEP Global Resource Outlook (2019), along with papers in Nature, Science, Ecological Economics and other journals.
<b>Prof Carolyn Hendriks</b>	Carolyn is a Professor at the Crawford School of Public Policy with a background in political science and environmental engineering. She has published widely on the democratic aspects of contemporary governance, including participation, public deliberation, inclusion and representation.
<b>Prof Mark Howden</b>	Mark is Director of the Institute for Climate, Energy and Disaster Solutions at The Australian National University, an Honorary Professor at Melbourne University, a Vice Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and Chair of the ACT Climate Change Council. He has worked on climate variability, climate change, innovation and adoption issues for over 30 years in partnership with many industry, community and policy groups via both research and science-policy roles.
<b>Prof Stuart Khan</b>	Stuart is a Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Director of the Australian Graduate School of Engineering (AGSE) at the University of New South Wales. His research focuses on the presence, implications and treatment of contaminants in water systems including drinking water, waste water, recycled water and the environment.

*Continued on next page...*

**Table 4: Watertrust Australia Expert Advisory Panel**

Name	Bio
<b>Dr Erin O'Donnell</b>	Erin is a Senior Fellow at the Melbourne University Law School and a water law and policy expert, focusing on water markets, environmental flows, and water governance. She is recognized internationally for her research into the groundbreaking new field of legal rights for rivers, and the challenges and opportunities these new rights create for protecting the multiple social, cultural and natural values of rivers.
<b>Prof Jamie Pittock</b>	Jamie is Professor in the Fenner School of Environment and Society at The Australian National University. His research from 2007 has focused on better governance of the interlinked issues of water management, energy and food supply, responding to climate change and conserving biological diversity.
<b>Dr Carmel Polino</b>	Carmel is a Research Director for Land and Water at CSIRO. She has 20 years of experience working on water issues in Australia and throughout Asia. She has degrees in science and environmental law and works across the science and policy interface.
<b>Assoc Prof Jacki Schirmer</b>	Jacki is an Associate Professor at the University of Canberra where she leads the Regional Wellbeing Survey team. Her research focuses on understanding how to support wellbeing and resilience of people and communities across Australia in ways that also support the health of the environment. s
<b>Prof Fran Sheldon</b>	Fran is Professor and Dean (Learning and Teaching) in the Griffith Sciences group at Griffith University and a Research Member in the Australian Rivers Institute. Her research explores the relationships between hydrology, physical geomorphology and ecology in river systems, particularly large dryland rivers such as those of the Murray-Darling Basin and the Lake Eyre Basin.
<b>Prof Craig Simmons</b>	Craig is a leading groundwater scientist, recognised for major contributions to groundwater science, science leadership, education and policy reform. He is a Distinguished Professor at Flinders University and has diverse and interdisciplinary research interests and expertise in essential areas of groundwater hydrology, hydrological science, environmental science, earth science, geoscience and applied physical and engineering sciences.
<b>Prof Geoff Syme</b>	Geoffrey Syme was a Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Western Australia, Nedlands from 1974 to 1976 and joined what is now the CSIRO Land and Water Division in 1976 rising to the position of Chief Research Scientist. Geoff has had a long-term interest in interdisciplinary approaches to water resources management decision-making. He has published widely internationally and is currently an Editor in Chief for the Journal of Hydrology and member of the Editorial Boards of: Social Justice Research; Rural Society; Australasian Journal of Environmental Management; People and Physical Environment Research; Open Geography.
<b>Prof Poh-Ling Tan</b>	Poh-Ling is an Emeritus Professor at Griffith University and is recognised as one of the foremost water governance experts in Australia. She serves on a number of state/national boards and advisory committees and has over 35 years of work in legal practice and academia with expertise spanning property law, legal systems to water resource law and governance.
<b>Assoc Prof Simon Toze</b>	Simon obtained his PhD in Environmental Microbiology from the University of Queensland in 1992 and has been working with CSIRO since 1994 on a range of water based topics. He is an honorary Associate Professor with the UQ School of Population Health.
<b>Glen Walker</b>	Glen is a groundwater hydrologist, who worked with CSIRO in Adelaide for over 30 years before setting up his own consultancy, Grounded in Water. He specializes in salinity and groundwater sustainability.

*Continued on next page...*



**Table 4: Watertrust Australia Expert Advisory Panel**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Bio</b>
Assoc Prof Carina Wyborn	Carina holds an ARC Discovery Early Career Research Award at the Australian National University's Institute for Water Futures and is an interdisciplinary social scientist with background in science and technology studies, and human ecology. She works at the intersection of science, policy, and practice, where she is interested in understanding how decisions are made in complex and contested environmental management challenges.

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Figure 1 – Rainfall anomaly maps by Chris Auricht based on Bureau of Meteorology data

Figure 2 – River Murray inflows density charts by Rod Marsh based on Murray–Darling Basin Authority data

Figure 3 – Watertrust Australia

Figure 4 – Watertrust Australia



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