

Media Release

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Australia is effectively securing its water supplies: State of the Water Sector Report 2013 released

4 November 2013: Water industry professionals across Australia are in broad agreement that the key sector objectives of ensuring water security and the effective management of sewage are being effectively managed.

The *State of the Water Sector Report 2013* report, released today by Deloitte and the Australian Water Association (AWA), reveals the top five concerns for the industry in 2013 to be:

1. Maintaining and augmenting infrastructure
2. Improving operational efficiency
3. Ensuring water supplies are secure
4. Responding to community concern over rising prices
5. Managing catchments effectively

Chief Executive of the Australian Water Association, Jonathan McKeown, said the report was based on a survey of more than 1,500 professionals working across Australia's water industry and highlighted a move towards focusing on operational efficiencies and maintaining and augmenting existing infrastructure.

“With the exception of operational efficiency, which was a new category in this 2013 survey, the top five concerns of the industry are consistent with previous years. Operational efficiency concerns are likely to reflect thinking about the need to initiate cost control measures and demonstrate value for money in an environment when prices are rising both in the water sector and across other utility sectors.

“Further, at a time when a lot of large infrastructure projects have been put on hold, there is the need to ensure we continue to invest in the maintenance of these projects, so the investment is not redundant and needs to be repeated when we next hit difficult weather conditions,” said Mr McKeown.

Deloitte Risk Services Partner and National Water Leader Matt Williams, went on to say that sustainability was rated as a less important issue than in previous years.

“Only 18% of respondents identified the long term environmental impact of the sector as an issue in 2013, compared to 22% in 2012 and 42% in 2010. This could be due to a recent return to more normal rainfall levels across most of the country and therefore a reduction in the focus among water utilities and consumers on water efficiency. It would also appear to be consistent with shifts in broader community concerns about climate change and associated environment issues.

“Another issue that is causing significantly less concern in the last year has been around skills shortages, which has almost halved. This is likely to be due both to a reduction in demand for additional staff, as well as a greater availability of skilled labour given construction activity in the mining industry has eased.

“This is an interesting development, but also one the industry needs to be wary of, with the risk of skill and labour gaps developing when water specialist expertise is needed in the future.”



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About the Australian Water Association

The Australian Water Association is Australia’s leading membership association for water professionals and organisations. AWA is independent and not for profit. It plays an essential role in supporting the Australian water sector in the delivery of effective and sustainable water management practices. Our mission is to foster knowledge, understanding and advancement in sustainable water management – its science, practice and policy – through advocacy, collaboration and professional development. We operate across all Australian States and Territories through an active branch network as well as maintaining extensive international links, including with the International Water Association. AWA’s provides a comprehensive program of conferences, workshops, publications, industry programs, training courses, networking and B2B opportunities. AWA’s Annual Conference and Exhibition is Australia’s largest water industry event.

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