

# HUNTER WATER AGENCY INFORMATION GUIDE

2017

HUNTER WATER



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (“GIPA Act”) promotes open, accountable, fair and effective government in NSW by providing members of the public with the right to access government information. This right is restricted only when there is an overriding public interest against disclosing the particular information.

This Agency Information Guide explains the functions of Hunter Water Corporation, what information we hold, and how you can interact with us.

## 2 ABOUT US

Hunter Water is a NSW State Owned Corporation (SOC) providing drinking water, wastewater, recycled water and some stormwater services to a population approaching 600,000 people in homes and businesses across the Lower Hunter.

Under the Hunter Water Act 1991, our Board comprises nine members including the Managing Director, Chairperson and seven independent Directors appointed by Hunter Water's Shareholding Ministers. The Board of Directors oversee the organisation's policies, management and performance. The Board of Directors set strategic direction for the organisation and ensure Hunter Water achieves its business and regulatory commitments.

If you would like to know more about how Hunter Water is directed and managed, please take a look at our website under “Corporate Governance.” If you do not have internet access, please call us and we will forward this information to you. If you have any enquiries regarding the Board of Directors, shareholders and company affairs please direct them to the Company Secretary of Hunter Water.

### 2.1 How we operate

Hunter Water delivers services under an Operating Licence granted by the NSW Government. The Licence protects consumers by prescribing minimum standards of service that Hunter Water must meet in relation to:

- drinking water quality - supplying customers with safe drinking water
- water continuity - providing customers with a reliable supply of water
- water pressure - providing customers with water at acceptable pressure for everyday use
- wastewater transport - providing the reliable transport of sewage.

Our services, projects and activities cover 6,671 square kilometres in the areas of Cessnock, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Newcastle, Port Stephens, Dungog, and small parts of Singleton. We deliver an average of 188 megalitres (one megalitre equals one million litres) of water per day. Our major water sources are: Grahamstown Dam (182,305ML), Chichester Dam (18,356ML), Tomago Sandbeds (60,000ML) and Anna Bay Sandbeds (16,024ML). We supply bulk water to small parts of the Great Lakes area and are capable of sharing up to 35ML per day with the Central Coast.

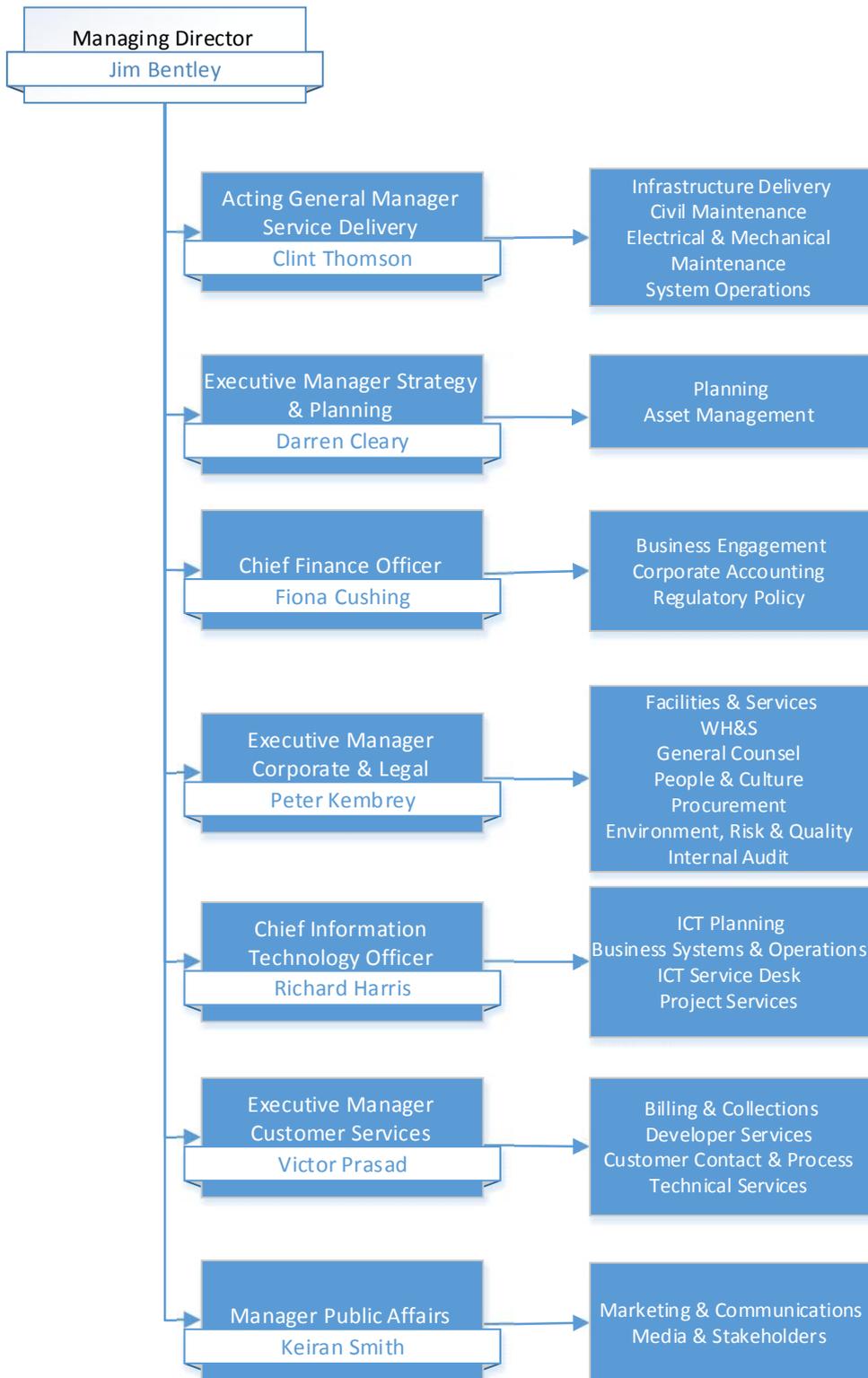
We maintain an extensive system to transport wastewater (sewage), which includes 4,995km of sewer mains, 434 wastewater pumping stations and 19 wastewater treatment works, treating almost 70,000ML of wastewater annually. We also own and operate a small amount of stormwater assets in Lake Macquarie, Newcastle and Cessnock.

Detailed information and statistics regarding our infrastructure, assets, income, expenditure and human resources are published in the Annual Report, available on the Hunter Water website. Please contact us if you do not have internet access and we will forward a copy of this report to you.

## 2.2 Our structure

The Hunter Water Management Team consists of the Managing Director and seven Chief Officers. The Executive Management Team oversees policy implementations, the day-to-day management of our people, and the delivery of services to our customers across the different divisions.

### 2.2.1 Organisational Structure Chart



## **2.3 Our decision-making functions that affect the public**

### **2.3.1 Land and Property Development**

Hunter Water is responsible for the installation of all new water and sewer services and for ensuring that we protect the ongoing supply of quality water and sewer services for our community.

If you are subdividing land or developing property, we need to approve the installation of all new water and sewer services. If you're building 1.5 metres or less from one of our water or sewer mains or sewer junction, then we need to approve your plans and you need to follow our requirements.

### **2.3.2 Billing**

Residential customers receive a bill from Hunter Water three times a year. Commercial customers may be billed more frequently. Water and sewer charges for customers consist of a fixed service charge and a usage charge. We may restrict or disconnect the supply to your property and/or take legal action if you do not pay outstanding debts or comply with agreed arrangements.

### **2.3.3 Water Meters**

Only Hunter Water or a licensed plumber can fit water meters to a property. Hunter Water requires customers' properties have an approved water meter installed (known as the main water meter) to measure the volume of water supplied to each property.

### **2.3.4 Trade Waste**

Trade wastewater is any liquid waste generated from any non-residential property (commercial or industrial, business, trade, or manufacturing process) discharged into the sewerage system. It does not include domestic wastewater. Only trade wastewater which complies with specific guidelines may be discharged into the sewerage system.

All companies and businesses operating in the Hunter Water area of operations and discharging trade wastewater into the sewerage system need to be aware of our trade wastewater requirements.

### **2.3.5 Standpipes**

Standpipes are portable hydrants designed to be connected to a fire hydrant in a water main to gain access to bulk water. All standpipes used in our area of operations must be metered and hired from us.

### **2.3.6 Pipe maintenance and repair**

Hunter Water is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of the wastewater network, however home owners also have responsibilities. Property owners are responsible for all of the fittings and pipes inside the property boundary through to the connection point with Hunter Water's pipes.

### **2.3.7 Recycled water**

Dual reticulation or 'third pipe' schemes deliver highly treated recycled water to residential areas through a separate purple pipe. This pipe supplies recycled water that is suitable for use in toilet flushing, garden irrigation, washing machines, car washing and surface cleaning.

All plumbing work in recycled water suburbs needs to be carried out by a licenced plumber in accordance with the Plumbing Code of Australia (PCA) and Hunter Water Services Requirements. All new homes built in recycled water suburbs will have to undergo a series of inspections by NSW Fair Trading at various stages of construction.

### **2.3.8 Illegal connections**

It is illegal to connect stormwater to the wastewater system as it increases the volume delivered for treatment and can overload our wastewater treatment plants. Hunter Water conducts inspections and smoke testing to detect illegal stormwater connections and will require the property owner to remove any illegal work.

### **2.3.9 Backflow prevention**

Hunter Water's water supply system is designed to ensure that water flows to a customer's property under pressure. If this pressure is not maintained or a cross connection occurs, there is a chance that water could be drawn back into our system. To protect our water system from contamination, all properties connected to our water supply must install a backflow prevention device appropriate to the property's hazard rating.

Only licensed plumbers with backflow prevention accreditation issued by a registered training organisation can install, inspect, commission and test backflow devices.

## **3 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION**

Hunter Water works in and around our community each and every day. We have a firm commitment to communicating and supporting people throughout the lower Hunter.

### **3.1 Community Consultative Forum**

Hunter Water's Community Consultative Forum is an advisory body made up of community representatives who provide us with advice on customer and consumer interests in relation to our Customer Contract and the operational requirements of our Operating Licence.

The Forum enables two-way, open communication between Hunter Water and local councils, customer representatives and environmental and community organisations.

### **3.2 Customer Panel**

Hunter Water also engages a Customer Panel comprised of customers who wish to share their views and help us gather feedback from the community about current programs or proposed initiatives.

### **3.3 Community Funding Program**

Hunter Water's Community Funding Program offers community, schools and industry-related groups the opportunity to work with Hunter Water to deliver activities that relate to water and wastewater services. This Program supports the delivery of water-related infrastructure, community education and conservation projects.

Our Community Funding Program involves community infrastructure partnerships, sustainability grants, education scholarships and employee charity support.

## 4 TYPES OF INFORMATION HELD BY HUNTER WATER

Hunter Water keeps records associated with its core functions of providing water and wastewater services to the Lower Hunter region, as well as documents dealing with administrative matters. Documents held include the following:

Information Types	
Policies / Standards	Letters / Emails
Maps & Diagrams	Confidential Employee Files
Contracts & Agreements	Photographs
Tenders / Specifications	News & Media Releases
Agendas & Minutes of Meetings	Confidential Customer Details
Business Files	Submissions & Briefings
Legal Documents	Plans & Strategies
Reports – Admin., Environmental, Financial	
Applications for Development, Connections, & Building over Assets	

Requests for access to information will be treated on their merits. Hunter Water reserves the right to refuse access where there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

## 5 HOW TO ACCESS HUNTER WATER INFORMATION

### 5.1 Open Access Information

Information is available on our website on our Right to Information page. This page provides links to the following information:

- Reports and Publications
- Policy Documents and Policy Guide
- Documents Tabled in Parliament
- Register of Hunter Water Contracts
- Disclosure Log - information which may be of interest to the general public which has already been released under GIPA

### 5.2 Proactive disclosure

Hunter Water releases information to the public regularly regarding recent and ongoing projects via its website. Some examples are:

[Community Funding Program](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Major Infrastructure Projects](#)

[Media & Ministerial Releases regarding Hunter Water](#)

[Our History & Heritage](#)

[Regulatory, Water Quality and Other Reports](#)

Hunter Water also has the following documents, manuals and brochures, which are available free of charge from the following links and/or Hunter Water's Right to Information Officer:

#### **Governing Legislation**

[State Owned Corporations Act 1989](#)

[Hunter Water Act 1991](#)

## **Obligations to Customers**

[Customer Contract](#)

[Consultative Forum Charter](#)

## **Guidelines for Hunter Water**

[Standard Technical Specifications](#)

[Standard Drawings](#)

[Water & Sewer Design Manuals](#)

## **Information and Guidance for Customers**

[Discharge of Cooling Tower Water to Sewer Guidelines](#)

[Guidelines for Installation and Maintenance of Oil Separators](#)

[Guidelines for Installation and Maintenance of Grease Arrestors](#)

[Guidelines for General Pre-Treatment and Maintenance Requirements for Trade Waste Generators](#)

[Plumbing Guidelines](#)

[Backflow Prevention Fact Sheet](#)

[Tankering Waste](#)

[Trade Wastewater Policy](#)

[Consultative Forum Papers](#)

[Fact Sheets](#)

## **Reports on Operational Performance and Planning**

[Hunter Water Corporation's Annual Report](#)

[Operating Licence](#)

[Links to Regulatory, Water Quality and Other Reports](#)

[Links to Plans and Strategies for Catchment Management, Water Quality and Environmental](#)

Additional information is available on Hunter Water's [website](#) which may be of interest to you.

### **5.3 Informal access**

Members of the public can request information from Hunter Water on any topic of interest. If Hunter Water staff know that the requested information is easily accessible and is clearly in the public interest to disclose, the information will be supplied free of charge. Members of the public can also request information via the Right to Information Officer (contact details are in part 6 of this document).

Some information is subject to an approved charge as determined by the Independent Pricing Tribunal of NSW. This type of information usually forms part of Hunter Water's day to day operations such as conveyancing certificates, service location diagrams for water and sewer, property sewerage diagrams and billing record searches. This type of information cannot be accessed under GIPA and you will be required to pay the appropriate charge.

## 5.4 Formal access

In some cases, requests for detailed information need to be made using the formal access process under the GIPA Act. In this case an [application form](#) needs to be lodged with Hunter Water's Right to Information Officer with a \$30 application fee. There may be further charges for processing your application depending on the resources and time required to process your request. The application fee you have paid will count towards these charges. We will provide you with an estimate of any charges at the earliest opportunity and you will have the opportunity to seek a discount or waiver.

## 6 CONTACT DETAILS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Hunter Water's Right to Information Officers can be contacted as follows:

Head office: 36 Honeysuckle Drive, Newcastle West

Postal address: PO Box 5171 HRMC NSW 2310

Telephone: (02) 4979 9643 or (02) 4979 9683

Facsimile: (02) 4979 9414

Email: [gipa@hunterwater.com.au](mailto:gipa@hunterwater.com.au)

The Information and Privacy Commission has a range of tools and resources including frequently asked questions regarding access to government information on their website:

<http://www.ipc.nsw.gov.au/>

You are also welcome to contact them directly:

Free call telephone: 1800 472 679

Email: [ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au)

Postal address: GPO Box 7011 Sydney NSW 2001

Office location: Level 17, 201 Elizabeth Street Sydney 2000

Office Hours: 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays).