



Department of Climate Change,  
Energy, the Environment and Water

# Annual report 2023–24

Volume 1

## Acknowledgement of Country

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

This resource may contain images or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.

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Artist and designer Nikita Ridgeway from Aboriginal design agency Boss Lady Creative Designs created the People and Community symbol.

Cover photo: Solar panels, Barunguba Montague Island Nature Reserve. Stuart Cohen/DCCEEW

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# Letter of submission

The Hon Penelope Sharpe MLC  
Minister for Climate Change  
Minister for Energy  
Minister for the Environment  
Minister for Heritage

The Hon Rose Jackson MLC  
Minister for Water

52 Martin Place  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ministers

I am pleased to submit the inaugural annual report for the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water for the year ended 30 June 2024, for tabling in Parliament by 30 November 2024.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the annual reporting provisions (Division 7.3) of the *Government Sector Finance Act 2018* and NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines—Annual Reporting Requirements TPG23-10.

Yours  
sincerely



Anthony Lean

Secretary

Encl: NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water annual report 2023-24

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# 1. Overview

## 1.1 Secretary's foreword

I am pleased to present the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) 2023–24 annual report.

This report focuses on achievements from 1 January to 30 June 2024 – the period since DCCEEW was formed – while achievements from 1 July to 31 December 2023 are in the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's 2023–24 annual report. In some instances, however, achievements from the whole period (i.e. 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024, including the period before DCCEEW was established) are referenced where they have ongoing relevance to the work of the newly formed DCCEEW.

DCCEEW was created as a dedicated department, to tackle climate change, lead the energy transition, protect the environment, care for heritage and manage one of our most precious natural assets, water. The bringing together of these core functions demonstrates the strong commitment to significantly improve these issues in NSW, for the benefit of future and current generations.

### Major achievements and milestones

Over the last year, DCCEEW has achieved some significant milestones in its journey towards its vision of 'thriving environments and communities, for every generation'.

Some of the major achievements of the new department are as follows:

- We supported the passage of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* in December 2023 and subsequent steps to establish the Net Zero Commission in the first half of 2024.
- We developed the *NSW plan for nature*, the NSW Government's response to put nature on a path to recovery. The plan will reform the biodiversity offsets scheme, end excess land clearing and strengthen environment protection.
- We continued to deliver on the *NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap*, including the declaration of the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) and implementation of the recommendations of the Electricity Supply and Reliability Check Up. This work will transform NSW's electricity sector, providing affordable, clean and reliable energy to NSW.
- We enhanced our national parks through nation-leading conservation programs and record levels of investment in visitor infrastructure, including opening 2 stunning new 'Great Walks' – the Tomaree Coastal Walk and the Grand Cliff Top Walk.
- In response to the Office of the Chief Scientist and Engineer's report into mass fish deaths at Menindee, we have ramped up river monitoring and commenced an innovative trial to manage water quality.
- We conserved and protected Aboriginal cultural heritage, by safeguarding the Butterfly Cave, a sacred Aboriginal women's site.

These are just some of the highlights and achievements we've managed to fulfill, with many more under way to meet our priorities.

## Looking ahead

I am honoured to be leading this new department, and I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our people working right across the department and the state to accomplish our vision for NSW.

I am proud of what we have achieved and look forward to delivering even greater outcomes for the environment and communities of NSW in the year ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Lean', is centered on a white rectangular background.

Anthony Lean  
Secretary



## 1.2 Aims and objectives

### Our purpose

Our purpose, as the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) is:

Together, we take action and empower others to:

- protect, restore and enhance the natural environment
- secure clean, reliable and affordable energy
- act on climate change to reduce emissions
- adapt to climate change
- sustain and improve water resources
- conserve and celebrate culture and heritage.

### Our vision

Thriving environments and communities, for every generation.

### Our values

In addition to the government sector core values of integrity, trust, accountability and service, DCCEEW staff provided feedback on the values during the development of the DCCEEW Strategic Plan in 2024. Two additional values were added: collaboration and courage.

## 1.3 Operations and performance

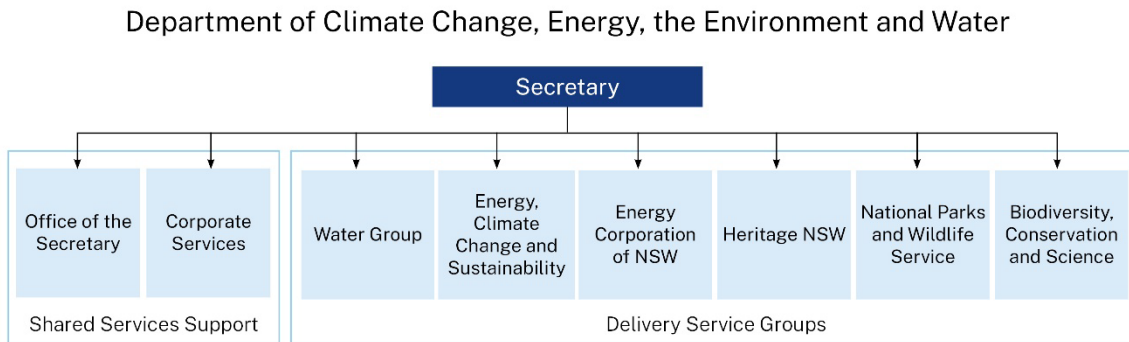
### Our ministers

During the reporting period, the department was responsible to the following ministers:

- Minister for Climate Change
- Minister for Energy
- Minister for the Environment
- Minister for Heritage
- Minister for Water.

### Our structure

The department is led by the Secretary and includes 6 delivery service groups. These are supported by shared services that enable their work, as outlined in Figure 1 on the next page.



**Figure 1 Department’s high-level organisation chart**

## Our management

### Principal officers as of 30 June 2024:

Anthony Lean, BA LLB

Secretary, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Amanda Jones, BSScI GDip CorpGov GAICD

Deputy Secretary, Water

Atticus Fleming AM, LLB BComm

Deputy Secretary, National Parks and Wildlife Service

Brendan Bruce, LLB(Hons)

Deputy Secretary, Biodiversity, Conservation and Science

Chris Hanger, BA(Hons) LLB

Chief Operating Officer

James Hay, LLB(Hons)

Chief Executive, Energy Corporation

Kim Curtain, BBus(Acc)(Hons) GradDipAppFin CA GAICD

Deputy Secretary, Energy, Climate Change and Sustainability

Mia Garrido, BInSt GradCertPA MPP MEc

Executive Director, Office of the Secretary

Sam Kidman, BA BComm

Executive Director, Heritage

## Network structure

The Climate Change, Energy and the Environment network was created on 1 January 2024, and consists of entities where the Secretary of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water employs staff. The network further includes entities allocated to it in the [Cabinet Office Governance Arrangements Chart](#) that are established under:

- Schedule 5 of the State Owned Corporations Act 1989
- Schedule 1 of the Government Sector Employment Act 2013.

The Climate Change, Energy and the Environment network structure during the reporting period is provided in Figure 2 on the next page.

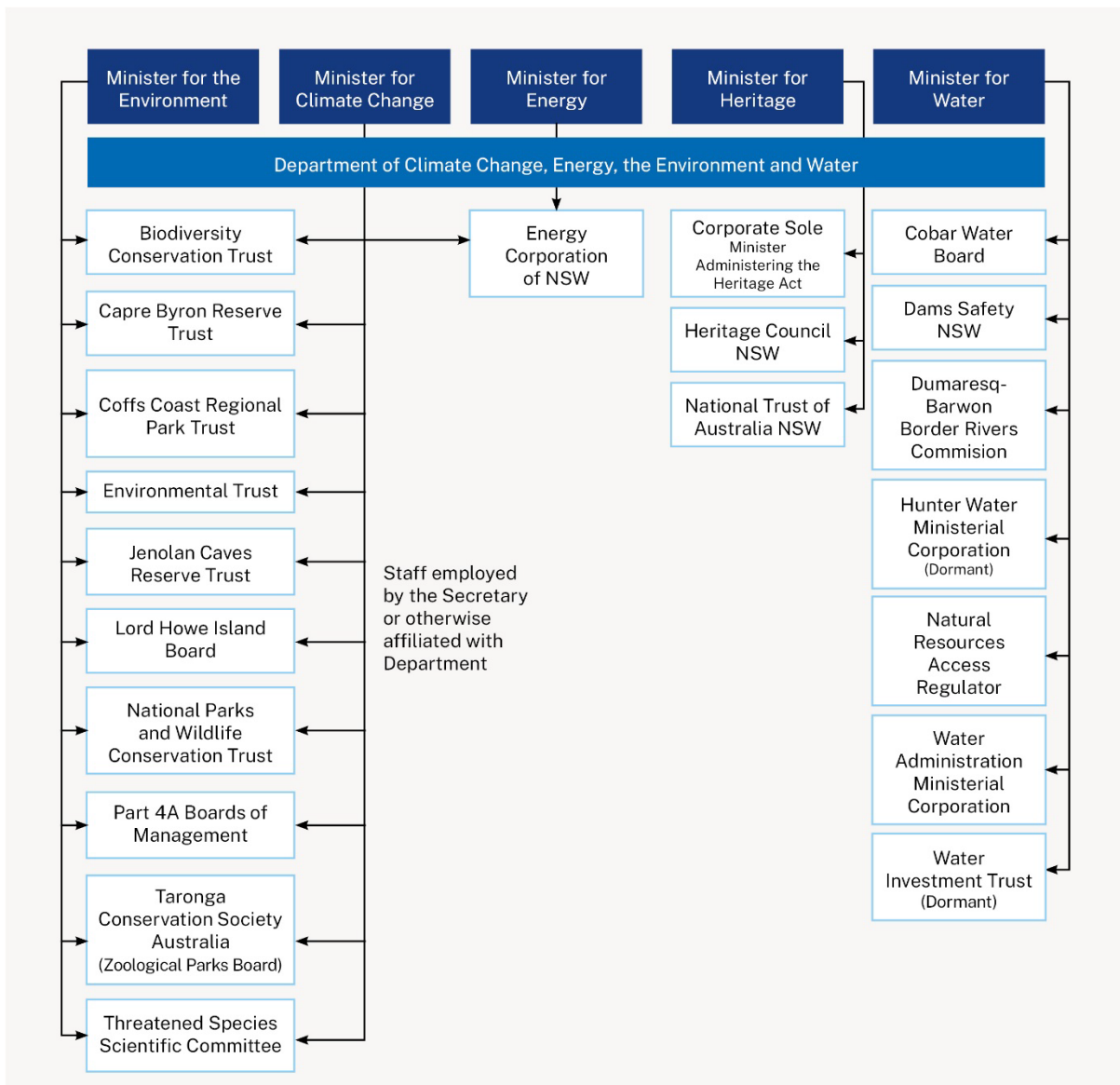
## Administrative changes to the department

Then NSW Government made several administrative changes that affected the department in the reporting period.

Table 1 summarises the changes administrative orders made that took effect, or were made during the reporting period, and provides associated links.

**Table 1 Administrative orders**

Effective from	Change
1 January 2024	<p>The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water was created and assigned to the following responsible ministers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minister for Climate Change</li> <li>• Minister for Energy</li> <li>• Minister for the Environment</li> <li>• Minister for Heritage</li> <li>• Minister for Water.</li> </ul> <p><u>Administrative Arrangements (Administrative Changes – Miscellaneous) Order (No 6) 2023–Schedule 4</u></p>
1 January 2024	<p>All staff carrying out Climate Change, Environment, Heritage, Energy and Water functions moved from the former Department of Planning and Environment and from Treasury to the new Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water and the Environment Protection Authority Staff Agency.</p> <p><u>Administrative Arrangements (Administrative Changes – Miscellaneous) Order (No 6) 2023 – Schedule 1</u></p>
31 January 2024	<p>The <u>Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023</u> was allocated to the Minister for Climate Change. Administrative support of the Net Zero Commission became the responsibility of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.</p> <p><u>Administrative Arrangements (Administrative Changes – Miscellaneous) Order 2024 – Schedule 2</u></p>



Agencies responsible to Portfolio Ministers but not associated Department

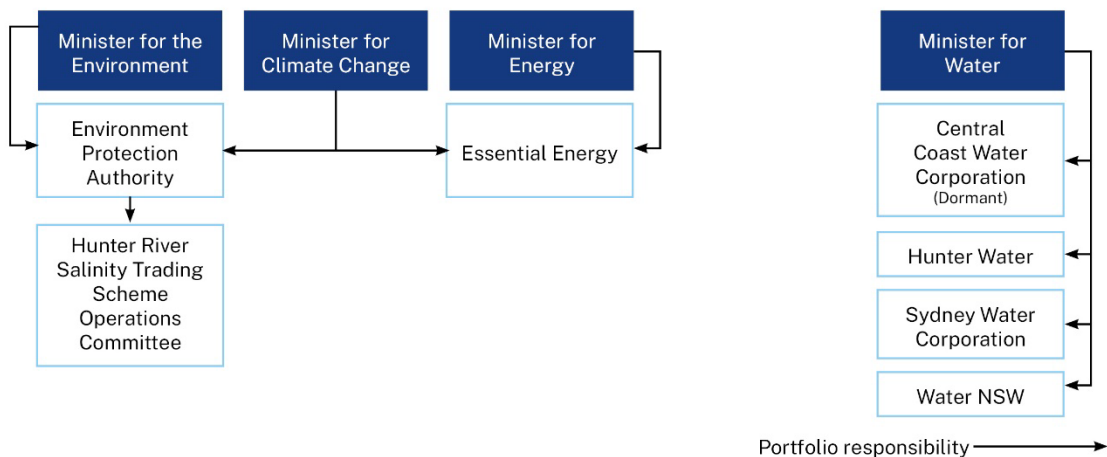


Figure 2 Network structure and ministers

Further changes were announced during the reporting period, but did not come into effect until the start of the next reporting period.

Table 2 summarises those changes.

**Table 2      Administrative orders announced 2023–24 to come into effect 2024–25**

Effective from	Change
1 July 2024	The Energy Corporation of New South Wales Staff Agency was created. The Energy Corporation of NSW Group was transferred from the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water to the Energy Corporation of New South Wales Staff Agency.  <u>Administrative Arrangements (Administrative Changes – Miscellaneous) Order (No 2) 2024 – Schedules 1 &amp; 4</u>

## 2. Strategy

### 2.1 Strategic objectives and outcomes

The department looks after the state's natural assets, energy and climate change policy, and heritage. This work includes:

- protecting, restoring and enhancing the natural environment
- conserving and celebrating culture and heritage
- improving and ensuring sustainable water resources
- acting on climate change to reduce emissions
- ensuring the state has secure, clean, reliable, and affordable energy.

The health and wellbeing of NSW residents depends on protecting the environment and retaining biodiversity to support thriving environments and communities, for every generation.

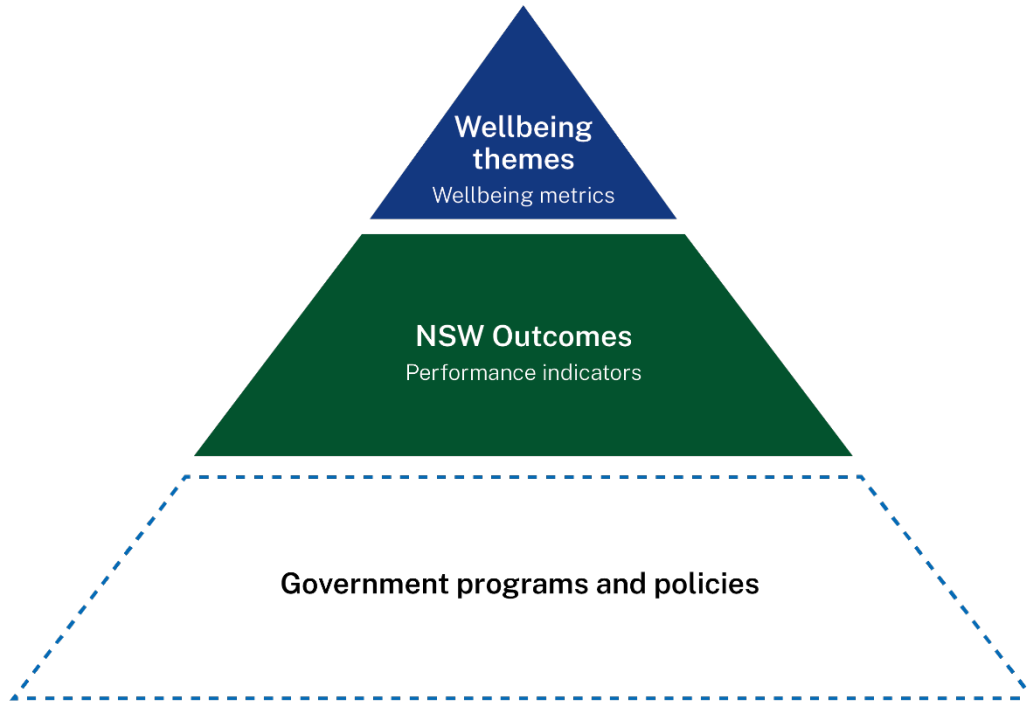
#### NSW Performance and Wellbeing Framework

The NSW Government is developing a Performance and Wellbeing Framework to report on the performance of government services, and the quality of life for the people of NSW. The framework will:

- show progress on long-term reform plans to build a better NSW
- put the community's needs and aspirations at the centre of government decision-making.

The framework has 2 parts: wellbeing themes and NSW Outcomes. Wellbeing themes are measured by wellbeing metrics. NSW Outcomes matched to each wellbeing theme are measured by performance indicators and implemented through government programs and policies (see Figure 3 on the next page).

The final framework and potential indicators will be refined in 2024 through public consultation before they are introduced in the 2025–26 Budget. As a result, proposed indicators may change.



**Figure 3** NSW Performance and Wellbeing Framework

**Table 3 Proposed NSW Performance and Wellbeing Framework**

Wellbeing theme							
Healthy	Skilled	Prosperous	Housed	Secure	Community	Connected	Sustainable
<p>A society where people have good physical and mental health, and can access the information and services they need to make improvements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People are healthy throughout life</li> <li>• People have equitable access to quality health and care services</li> <li>• People have good physical and mental health</li> </ul>	<p>A society that enables everyone to realise their potential through training and education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children get the best start in life and learning</li> <li>• People have the education and skills to thrive throughout life</li> </ul>	<p>A society that has a dynamic and resilient economy, and communities which provide opportunities for people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NSW has a vibrant, diverse and resilient economy that benefits everyone</li> <li>• All generations share the same opportunities to prosper</li> <li>• People have access to jobs and opportunities</li> </ul>	<p>A society where residents and families secure stable living conditions through access to housing, and where communities and places are thriving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People have access to safe, secure and affordable housing</li> <li>• Places are liveable and attractive</li> <li>• Communities are thriving and strong</li> </ul>	<p>A society where people live peacefully, and are safe at home and in their broader community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People live peacefully and feel safe</li> <li>• Communities are resilient to natural disasters and emergencies</li> </ul>	<p>A society that supports connections with family, friends and community, and promotes diversity and culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People have strong social bonds</li> <li>• People enjoy recreation and leisure</li> <li>• Our community values diversity, belonging and culture</li> <li>• People have trust in institutions and government</li> </ul>	<p>A society where people are connected, and services are accessible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People and businesses have easy access to government services</li> <li>• People, businesses and communities are connected through safe and reliable public transport</li> <li>• People and businesses are digitally connected</li> </ul>	<p>A society that sustainably uses natural resources, and protects, repairs and values its environment and heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The environment and natural resources can meet the needs of future generations</li> <li>• NSW has secure energy systems</li> <li>• NSW supports Aboriginal communities to care for Country</li> </ul>



## NSW Outcomes

Healthy	Skilled	Prosperous	Housed	Secure	Community	Connected	Sustainable
People receive timely, quality care in hospitals and the community	All children benefit from quality early childhood education and care	State finances are robust and sustainable	Quality housing solutions are efficient and affordable	Communities are safe	Government is coordinated, transparent and trusted	Government services are accessible, effective and integrated	A secure and sustainable transition to a circular economy and net zero
People are supported to make the best decisions for their health	All school students are supported to reach their full potential	Markets are fair and competitive, and workplaces are safe	Places are well-designed and sustainable	People have access to justice and protection under the law	Aboriginal people's voices are heard at the centre of government	People, businesses and communities are connected through safe and reliable public transport	Natural resources are used productively and sustainably
People are enabled to lead active lifestyles	Vocational education delivers the skills that people and businesses need	A vibrant and diverse economy that supports improving living standards	Vulnerable people have access to suitable housing	Children and families are safe and supported	Creative and cultural sectors are sustainable and growing	People and businesses have access to digital services	The environment and our heritage are protected, enhanced and enjoyed
		Everyone has access to productive and rewarding jobs		Communities are prepared for and resilient to disasters and emergencies	Communities are diverse, engaged and cohesive		Communities and business reduce emissions and adapt to climate change

## Wellbeing themes

Wellbeing themes contribute to the wellbeing of NSW communities. The NSW Performance and Wellbeing Framework has 8 wellbeing themes: healthy, skilled, prosperous, housed, secure, community, connected, and sustainable.

The department has already collected data for 4 potential wellbeing indicators under the sustainable wellbeing theme.

A sustainable NSW:

- values its environment and heritage
- manages natural resources responsibly
- balances the interests of current and future generations
- has secure energy systems
- supports Aboriginal communities to care for Country.

Wellbeing metrics support the indicators and help us keep track of changes in people's quality of life.

**Table 4 Potential wellbeing metrics under the sustainable wellbeing theme**

Indicator description	Metric	Current value
<p><b>Community concern about environmental issues which impact on their quality of life</b></p> <p>Provides insight into the impact of environmental issues from the community’s perspective</p>	NSW residents who are very concerned or extremely concerned that environmental issues will impact on:	
	• future generations	58% in March 2024
	• the NSW environment overall	52% in March 2024
	• their quality of life	45% in March 2024
	NSW residents whose home or property was damaged or destroyed by severe natural events in the last 5 years	17% in June 2024
NSW residents who believe that their property is at high or extremely high risk of being damaged or destroyed by severe natural events in the next 5 years	10% in June 2024	
<p><b>Air quality</b></p> <p>Gives insight into air pollution in NSW, which affects respiratory health</p>	Clean Air Metric for NSW	77% in 2023
<p><b>Biodiversity</b></p> <p>Understanding the state of biodiversity allows us to better manage species and ecosystems which need to be protected to support the health of the environment and NSW communities</p>	Ecosystem persistence	74% in 2020
	Ecological carrying capacity	29% in 2020
	Ecological condition	40% in 2020
	Ecosystems that can migrate in response to climate change (spatial resilience)	11% in 2013
<p><b>Emissions</b></p> <p>Tracking emissions will monitor the state’s performance in achieving greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets</p>	CO <sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions emitted in NSW (tracking scenario)	126,760 kilotons carbon dioxide equivalent in 2023–24

## NSW Outcomes

Each wellbeing theme is matched by NSW Outcomes, which cover key government activities and services. Government agencies share the implementation and achievement of NSW Outcomes.

Progress in meeting NSW Outcomes will support wellbeing.

As of June 2024, the department has only collected data for NSW Outcomes that support the sustainable and community wellbeing themes.

The NSW Outcomes that support the sustainable wellbeing theme are:

- a secure and sustainable transition to a circular economy and net zero
- natural resources are used productively and sustainably
- the environment and our heritage are protected, enhanced and enjoyed
- communities and businesses reduce emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

The NSW Outcome that supports the community wellbeing theme that the department contributes to is:

- Aboriginal people's voices are heard at the centre of government.

Each NSW Outcome is measured by performance indicators. These describe government activities in the state related to the NSW Outcome.

The department has proposed the following potential performance indicators for the above NSW Outcomes (see Table 5 to Table 9).

**Table 5 Potential performance indicators for the NSW Outcome: ‘A secure and sustainable transition to a circular economy and net zero’**

Indicator description	Metric	Current value
<p><b>Resource recovery rate</b></p> <p>Resource recovery is an important contributor to the circular economy</p>	Resource recovery rate	65% in 2022
<p><b>Electricity generation from renewable sources</b></p> <p>Decarbonising the electricity sector will contribute to achieving net zero</p>	Percentage of electricity generated through renewable sources	33.64% in 2022–23

**Table 6 Potential performance indicators for the NSW Outcome: ‘Natural resources are used productively and sustainably’**

Indicator description	Metric	Current value
<p><b>Water quality</b></p> <p>Monitoring the condition of water ensures aquatic resources can support biodiversity and human activities</p>	Proportion of monitoring sites in NSW with a Water Quality Index Rating of:	
	• ‘good’	12% in 2023
	• ‘moderate’	58% in 2023
	• ‘poor’	30% in 2023
	Percentage of sites with annual average Beach Suitability Grade of ‘very good’ or ‘good’	73% in 2023
<p><b>Soil health</b></p> <p>Soils support the growth of most plant life. They are a crucial element of land-based ecosystems and agriculture.</p>	Hillslope erosion	0.7tonnes/ha in 2023
	Wind erosion	258.1tonnes/ha in 2020
<p><b>Land clearing</b></p> <p>The clearing of native vegetation and the destruction of habitat associated with it is a threat to biodiversity in NSW.</p>	Clearing area of woody native vegetation	26,735 ha in 2021
	Clearing area of non-woody native vegetation	53,326 ha in 2021
	Clearing area total (may be impacted by rounding)	80,061 ha in 2021

**Table 7 Potential performance indicators for the NSW Outcome: ‘The environment and our heritage are protected, enhanced and enjoyed’**

<b>Indicator description</b>	<b>Metric</b>	<b>Current value</b>
<b>Community appreciation of biodiversity and heritage</b> Provides an insight into how the NSW community understands, values and acts to protect biodiversity and heritage.	NSW residents who agree or strongly agree that:	88% in 2024
	‘Nature and biodiversity are essential for the production of food, clean air and water, and medicines for people’	
	‘Nature and biodiversity are important for tackling climate change’	79% in 2024
	‘We have a responsibility to look after nature and biodiversity for future generations’	91% in 2024
	‘Nature and biodiversity are important for my personal recreation, relaxation and spiritual renewal’	76% in 2024
	‘Protection of heritage places is important to me’	73% in June 2024
<b>Land managed for the conservation of nature and heritage</b> Conservation ensures native species are protected, ensures natural resources are used in an ecologically sustainable manner, enables use for research, provides an opportunity for enjoyment and supports cultural uses	National parks and reserves	7,634,371 ha as of 2024
	Private conservation areas (administered by Biodiversity Conservation Trust)	529,851 ha as of 2024
	Private conservation areas (administered by Nature Markets and Offsets Division)	40,890 ha as of 2024
	Indigenous Protected Areas	37,939 ha as of 2022
	Marine parks and aquatic reserves	348,849 ha as of 2022
<b>National park visitation</b> A measure of NSW people enjoying the environment	Number of domestic visits each year to national parks	53,005,703 visits in 2022

**Table 8 Potential performance indicators for the NSW Outcome: ‘Communities and businesses reduce emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change’**

Indicator description	Metric	Current value
<b>Thermal comfort</b> Maintaining optimal temperatures in homes is increasingly important to protect people’s health in a changing climate	NSW residents who used air conditioning or fans to keep cool on the last very hot day	84% in March 2024
	NSW residents who used heating on the last very cold day	61% in March 2024
	NSW residents who are relatively confident or very confident that they can make their home more energy efficient	53% in March 2024

**Table 9 Potential performance indicators for the NSW Outcome: ‘Aboriginal people’s voices are heard at the centre of government’**

Indicator description	Metric	Current value
<b>Aboriginal land management</b> Aboriginal people maintain their culture and connection to Country, while obtaining cultural, social, health and economic benefits, and the department is better able to protect and interpret cultural heritage and apply Aboriginal knowledge to land management and conservation	National parks under Aboriginal Joint Management	2,334,619 ha as of 2024
	Private land under Aboriginal management	55,220 ha as of 2024

## 3. Operations and performance

### 3.1 Summary of significant operations

This section summarises what 5 of the 6 delivery groups in the department achieved during the reporting period.

These delivery groups were:

- Biodiversity, Conservation and Science
- National Parks and Wildlife Service
- Heritage NSW
- Energy, Climate Change and Sustainability
- Water Group.

The other delivery group, the Energy Corporation of NSW, prepares its own annual report, so is not included in this summary.

#### Biodiversity, Conservation and Science

##### Supporting the independent statutory review of the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016

In 2023, an eminent panel, chaired by Dr Ken Henry AC, led an independent review of the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016. The panel found that the Act was not achieving its purpose of maintaining ‘a healthy, productive and resilient environment for the greatest well-being of the community, now and into the future, consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development’, and was unlikely ever to do so.

The panel made 58 recommendations for improvement.

The department supported the whole-of-government response. This response, the *NSW plan for nature*, will be published in July 2024.

We also undertook a 5-year statutory review of the Biodiversity Assessment Method (BAM). The Minister for the Environment released the review in March 2024. It made 32 recommendations to improve the BAM.

We are working on implementing 15 immediate and 7 short-term recommendations as part of the first phase.

##### Increasing the supply of biodiversity credits

The \$106-million Biodiversity Credits Supply Fund aims to increase the supply of in-demand biodiversity credits in the NSW market. From January to June 2024, the Supply Fund purchased biodiversity credits worth \$19.52 million and sold credits worth \$13.47 million.

The department worked to improve landholder participation in the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme, to increase the supply of credits. From January to June 2024, we approved



creating 197,710 credits on more than 10,198 hectares of land under 32 biodiversity stewardship agreements.

The NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust also partnered with landholders through conservation agreements to enhance and conserve biodiversity on their land.

## **Releasing the NSW biodiversity outlook report 2024**

In May 2024, the department released the second [biodiversity outlook report](#).

The report provides an update on the status of biodiversity and ecological integrity in NSW. It updates indicator results from the first report in 2020, using improved methods and data. Some results were:

- The area of land permanently secured for conservation in NSW has grown to 11% of the state.
- Loss of habitat is the main reason for biodiversity loss.
- Only 50% of listed threatened species are expected to survive in 100 years.

## **Updating emissions projections**

We updated the [NSW Net Zero Emissions Dashboard](#), which shows the state is expected to deliver 44% to 50% reduction on 2005 levels of emissions by 2030, and 65% to 70% by 2035. We will continue to analyse available data to predict future reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

## **NSW Threatened Species Scientific Committee advice on the annual review of the performance of all parties to the NSW Shark Meshing (Bather Protection) Program Joint Management Agreement**

The NSW Shark Meshing (Bather Protection) Program (July 2017) is a joint management agreement between the former Minister for Primary Industries and the former Chief Executive of the Office of Environment and Heritage. Under clause 6 of the Biodiversity Conservation (Savings and Transitional) Regulation 2017, the agreement is now taken to be a joint management agreement under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*.

The committee's advice on the annual review of the performance of all parties to the NSW Shark Meshing (Bather Protection) Program Joint Management Agreement and the deficiencies in the implementation of the agreement by the parties to it under clause 2.25(11) of the Biodiversity Conservation Regulation 2017 for the year 2023–24 is published on the committee's webpage on the [department's website](#).

## **National Parks and Wildlife Service**

### **Implementing the biggest ever investment in infrastructure**

In 2023–24, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) invested more than \$240 million in visitor and operational infrastructure. This is the biggest investment ever. It is more than 5 times the 10-year average to 2019–20.

New and upgraded infrastructure is being opened throughout NSW to increase visitor numbers and enjoyment while protecting the environment and prioritising safety and accessibility. We have also invested in fire trails and operational infrastructure.

### **Looking after more than 50 million visitors to national parks**

National tourism data shows that from 2022–23 to 2023–24, the number of:

- domestic day trips which included a visit to a national park increased by over 14%
- domestic overnight trips which included a visit to a national park increased by 18%.

Over the same period, the number of nights spent in NPWS campgrounds and accommodation increased by 7% to a total of 1.9 million nights in 2023–24. Satisfaction remained very high, with 9 in 10 visitors being satisfied or very satisfied with their overnight stay.

### **Adding 73,000 hectares of land to the national parks estate**

Over the 12 months to June 2024, we made 22 additions to the national parks estate, acquiring 73,000 hectares of land. Highlights included the 37,000-hectare Comerook Station, north west of Bourke, and several high-biodiversity parcels of land protecting koalas and other threatened species.

Once the newly acquired lands are gazetted, these additions will bring the total area of land in national parks and reserves to 8,336 million hectares, or 10.4% of NSW.

### **Supporting staff safety and wellbeing**

We improved staff safety and wellbeing by:

- introducing dedicated measures to support mental health
- rolling out Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy training
- establishing the Rainbow Lyrebirds, a safe space where LGBTQIA+ employees can connect, support one another, and collaborate on initiatives that promote diversity, inclusion and equality throughout the organisation
- the executive regularly engaging with the Aboriginal Network, the Spokeswomen Committee, the Female Field Officer Network and the WHS Women’s Consultative Committee.

### **Continuing Aboriginal partnerships**

We continued to work on Aboriginal land and with Aboriginal communities, and supported 34 joint management arrangements with Aboriginal partners.

We continued to develop a new model for Aboriginal joint management of NSW national parks and reserves, and integrate this model with the [NSW Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2022–24](#). Closing the Gap is the agreed process for governments across Australia to work with Aboriginal people to improve equality.

We worked with the Me-Mel Transfer Committee on recommendations to the NSW Government to transfer Me-Mel (Goat Island) to Aboriginal ownership, governance and management. Minister Sharpe, Minister Harris and Premier Minns reconfirmed the

Government's commitment to this project in July 2023, signing a memorandum of understanding with the Me-Mel Transfer Committee.

Other successful Aboriginal partnerships in 2023–24 included:

- finalising Indigenous land use agreements with the Wongkumura people and for the Tar-Ru lands – the Wongkumara outcome holds great significance as the first time that section 47C of the *Native Title Act 1993* (Commonwealth) has been used to ignore the historic extinguishment of native title
- acquiring Butterfly Cave, a sacred Aboriginal women's site of great cultural significance to the Awabakal people
- the dual naming of places in national parks such as Barunguba Montague Island Nature Reserve, Nguthungulli/Julian Rocks and Walgun/Cape Byron
- completing 10 cultural burns in partnership with local Aboriginal communities.

### **Completing our first Ecological Health Performance Scorecard**

We continued implementing our Ecological Health Performance Scorecards program, to provide evidence-based, cost-effective information to enhance ecological management of parks and reserves. For each group of parks, the program collects ecological data, and combines it with financial and management records. In June 2024, we published our first scorecard for Royal, Heathcote and Garawarra reserves.

### **Ensuring national parks are strongholds for threatened species**

The NSW independent inquiry into the 2019–20 bushfires highlighted the need to ensure environmental and cultural assets in parks and reserves were protected well in advance of bushfires and other emergencies. The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* was amended so a site could be declared as an Asset of Intergenerational Significance (AIS).

Conservation action plans (CAPs) are prepared for AIS sites which prioritise conservation actions, including increasing site protection during bushfires.

Conserving threatened species habitat is the current focus of AIS declarations. As of 30 June 2024, there are 279 AIS sites and 109 CAPs that secure the most important habitat in national parks for 129 threatened species.

In 2023–24, conservation actions included:

- controlling feral animals such as foxes and cats to protect threatened species like the rufous scrub-bird and brush-tailed rock-wallaby
- establishing ex-situ living collections and seedbanks to secure threatened plants such as *Kydra dampiera* and the dwarf mountain pine
- raising awareness of, and appreciation for, threatened species in national parks through AIS interpretation projects across NSW, including:
  - installing the Guthega skink rock sculptures in Kosciuszko National Park
  - improving the online AIS interactive map
  - creating the online Border Ranges 360-degree experience.

We also continued to develop the threatened species inventory, to generate a data-based assessment of the trajectory for the 780 threatened species in national parks. This is part of the ambitious goal of stabilising or improving the presence of these species by 2030.

### **Creating feral predator-proof areas and reintroducing locally extinct species to parks**

We are establishing feral predator-free areas to reverse the decline of threatened species preyed on by feral animals like foxes and cats. It is a key element of delivering on a commitment to zero extinctions in NSW national parks.

In 2023–24, 13 locally extinct threatened mammal species were reintroduced into predator-free areas in national parks. These included the eastern bettong which was reintroduced into Yiraaldiya National Park after becoming extinct in the area more than 100 years ago.

Other reintroductions included:

- returning the duck-billed platypus to Royal National Park after an absence of 50 years
- the first koala translocation under the NSW Koala Strategy to Yiraaldiya National Park in Western Sydney.

### **Completing 75% of all hazard reduction burns in NSW parks**

We completed around 75% of scheduled hazard reduction burns in NSW in 2023–24. This involved 170 hazard reduction burns, treating around 90,000 hectares of land with a continued focus on the highest risk areas to protect life and property. Around 88% of all fires starting in parks were contained in parks, and 73% were contained to less than 10 hectares.

We also:

- worked closely with the NSW Rural Fire Service on more than 20 emergency bushfires
- helped with international bushfire emergencies, with more than 50 NPWS firefighters joining other specialists from NSW who were deployed to Canada during their 2023 summer
- recognised the ecological role of fire when developing new measures to protect ecological and cultural assets in parks through conservation action plans and bushfire risk management plans
- published guidelines to define standards, roles and responsibilities for managing wildlife injured by bushfires and other incidents. These were funded by the NSW Environmental Trust, NSW Bushfire Inquiry and the NSW Koala Strategy.

## Removing more than 50,000 feral animals from parks

In 2023–24, to control feral animals in parks, we conducted more than 2,200 hours of aerial shooting, 340 days of ground shooting and 12,627 nights of trapping. As part of this exercise, we removed 22,000 goats, 16,000 pigs and 4,000 deer.

We also delivered a large-scale aerial baiting program to target foxes, and controlled wild dogs under the Biosecurity Act.

## Controlling 71,245 hectares of weeds

We weeded more than 71,000 hectares of land. More than 38,000 hectares of these weeds were targeting threatened species and their habitats.

## Protecting historic heritage

Toorale Homestead and Woolshed Precinct in Toorale National Park near Bourke were listed on the State Heritage Register for their long history, ongoing Aboriginal occupation by the Kurnu Baakandji people and early European settlement.

We delivered education, training and Aboriginal site protection works to support communities throughout NSW to conserve and protect Aboriginal heritage in parks, and contributed \$1.9 million to repairing and maintaining 23 historic heritage assets, 20 of which are of State Significance.

## Responding to climate change

In 2022, we assessed and publicly disclosed our climate risk in accordance with the Climate Risk Ready Guide – see [NPWS Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures Statement](#) for our risk profile.

Following this assessment, in 2023–24 we continued to manage risks and combat climate change impacts in parks and reserves by:

- protecting climate refuges for endangered species
- building improved infrastructure after damage from disasters
- supporting cultural continuity in vulnerable landscapes
- continuing to minimise the contribution of conservation land management to climate change, as detailed in [Carbon positive by 2028](#) which sets a net zero operations target for the agency.

## Reporting required for Aboriginal Boards of Management under s71AQ of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974

Boards of Management are established under Part 4A of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. Land is returned to Registered Aboriginal Owners, with local Aboriginal land councils holding title to the land on behalf of the Aboriginal Owners. This is then leased back to the NSW Government to be managed as a national park.

The boards comprise mainly Aboriginal Owners and representatives from neighbouring properties, local councils, conservation groups and NPWS. The boards are responsible for the care, control and management of the parks.

### *Biamanga and Gulaga National Park Board of Management*

The boards have been jointly implementing the Yuin Bangguri (Mountain) Parks Plan of Management. Significant achievements in 2023–24 included:

- appointing and inducting Biamanga and Gulaga Boards of Management members for the new 5-year board term
- holding 4 board meetings and 2 joint board meetings
- buying land adjoining the western boundary of Biamanga National Park
- adding nearly 200 hectares of culturally and ecologically significant land at Dignams Creek and Bellbrook to Gulaga National Park
- supporting the Trainee Ranger program for Biamanga and Gulaga national parks
- hosting Biraga Bunaan Back to Country – this event is open to everyone and celebrates Aboriginal culture and connection to Country – activities included weaving, painting, traditional dance, live music, Elders’ tent, and videos celebrating the hand back and cultural stories
- hosting an event for Registered Aboriginal Owners to celebrate the one-year anniversary of the dual naming of Barunguba Montague Island Nature Reserve
- supporting ongoing koala surveys and cultural burning on Country
- reopening Biamanga Cultural Area
- developing a plan and starting to implement actions for the new Biamanga National Park property and meeting place
- starting to plan for a new gathering place and shelter in Gulaga National Park
- starting to plan for new and updated interpretation at visitor sites in Gulaga and Biamanga national parks.

### *Gaagal Wanggaan (South Beach) National Park Board of Management*

The board continues to function effectively, ensuring quality outcomes for the Gumbaynggirr people. For the first time since its establishment in 2012, the board has a full contingent of 13 members and has filled 12 deputy member positions. The board commenced the appointment process for the third term of the board which will commence in October 2024.

Achievements in 2023–24 included:

- buying culturally and environmentally significant land to add to the park
- developing a Land Acquisition Strategy to future proof the park against climate change and rising sea levels, and add important lands to the park and care, control and management of the board
- engaging a Back to Country Coordinator to support Gumbaynggirr People’s access to the park for cultural activities – the coordinator delivered over 20 tailored cultural field days, taking community members to the park to fish, collect bush tucker and medicine, and visit cultural sites

- continuing to develop a plan of management to be publicly exhibited in 2024–25 – this included extensive engagement with Gumbaynggirr stakeholders and 4 on-Country planning meetings as well as engagement with the local shire council, Scotts Head community and relevant government agencies; the plan will ensure that Gumbaynggirr culture and values are at the centre of the plan and inform park management and operations
- investing in weed eradication and aerial drone bitou bush spraying to fast-track weed eradication in the park
- accomplishing the first hazard reduction burn in the park since its establishment, using cultural burn techniques.

#### *Mount Grenfell Historic Site Board of Management*

The board of management, appointed in 2022, continued its operations. Four board meetings were held with part of each meeting occurring on Country at Mamboing or at the Historic Site. On 13 July 2024, the board celebrated the 20-year anniversary of the handback of the land to the Ngiyampaa Aboriginal Owners. Achievements in 2023–24 included:

- commencing a review of the lease, and working with NPWS staff to commence a review of the Mount Grenfell Plan of Management
- creating a ‘Keeping place’ at Mumboana
- controlling feral animals including goat mustering and pig baiting – the goat mustering assisted with revenue to the Mount Grenfell Trust
- finalising another fencing agreement with Mount Grenfell neighbours, which will assist with stock management and goat management.

#### *Mutawintji National Park Board of Management*

Achievements in 2023–24 included:

- increasing the employment of Wiimpatja people
- working with the Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council and NPWS on renewing the Mutawintji lease
- running the annual Mutawintji Cultural Festival, for Wiimptaja to return to Country and publicly showcase their culture – there were tours of Ngalkirrka Gorge and the Historic Site, and performances by local and national traditional dance groups
- undertaking an innovative approach to operations and training by hiring a contractor to maintain roads and fire trails, and train NPWS staff at Mutawintji in using heavy plant equipment such as graders, trucks, rollers, loaders and tractors – this successfully led to knowledge transfer from local experts to Aboriginal Owners and vice versa, whilst also bringing Aboriginal Owner knowledge to the works
- Board members receiving 4WD training, and 2 members and some NPWS Mutawintji field staff attending firearms training
- the Board and NPWS Mutawintji staff continuing to work with the department’s Science, Economics and Insights Division and Sydney University on the Greenspots

project, which is researching the use of refugia in the arid landscape, specifically 'greenspots' and how they may act as important habitat during droughts

- progressing the Wangarru (yellow-footed rock-wallaby or *Petrogale xanthopus xanthopus*) translocation project, and inspecting sites suitable for translocations
- finalising a strategic plan to manage competition and land degradation by feral goats on Mutawintji Lands, recognising feral goats as a significant and increasing threat to biodiversity and cultural values
- undertaking the annual Mutawintji lizard survey in May, with significant increases in sightings of Barrier Range dragons *Ctenophorus mirrityana*, tree skinks *Egernia striolata* and kungaka *Liopholis whitii*
- approving the expansion of cat control on 3 sites on Mutawintji Lands –Western Ridge, Homestead Creek Gorge and around Wangarru populations.

#### *Worimi Conservation Lands (WCL) Board of Management*

Achievements in 2023–24 included:

- inducting, training and welcoming a new board in January 2024
- hosting a Back to Country Day with Registered Aboriginal Owners
- continuing to prepare the Board's Strategic Plan
- officially opening the new Hunter Coast Area office and depot jointly funded by the Board with NPWS, and located on the WCL – the official opening included a celebration with the Aboriginal community and NPWS
- engaging 4 local Worimi artists through a selective design process to create 4 artworks to hang in the new Hunter Coast Area office building and to use for WCL branding
- holding Worimi History Project meetings with the Office of the Registrar of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act
- working with local government on coastal management plans relevant to the WCL
- renewing an agreement under section 146 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act* with Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC), NPWS and Port Stephens Council (PSC) to manage commercial tourism across WCL, LALC and PSC tenures via a single licensing system, and holding meetings with the 13 licensed commercial tourism operators
- completing environmental and cultural assessments and topographical surveys as part of work to establish a traditional owner campground
- undertaking terrestrial laser scanning on the WCL to help understand changes and impacts to cultural heritage, elevation and contours, groundwater and surface water quality; and inform monitoring and management of the Ganyamalbaa campground.

#### *Bulagaranda (Mt Yarrowyck) Aboriginal Area Board of Management*

Achievements in 2023–24 included:

- employing a Joint Management Coordinator for 9 months during the financial year



- holding 2 Board meetings in Armidale
- developing a draft strategic plan to guide a future plan of management of jointly managed reserves around Armidale
- undertaking a field trip to inspect Mother of Ducks Nature Reserve and Imbota Nature Reserve, which are planned to be jointly managed in the future
- starting an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment at Bulagaranda Aboriginal Area as part of the process to apply for an Aboriginal Heritage Impact Assessment required to undertake upgrades to visitor facilities in the reserve
- beginning to plan for an upgrade to the entry to Bulagaranda Aboriginal Area.

### **Report required under section 24 of the *Wilderness Act 1987***

The *Wilderness Act 1987* provides the legislative framework to nominate, assess, identify, declare and manage wilderness areas. There are more than 2 million hectares of declared wilderness in NSW, representing about 2.6% of the state and 28% of the NSW national parks estate.

No land was added to declared wilderness areas in 2023–24.

Under section 9 of the *Wilderness Act 1987*, the department manages wilderness areas to restore (if applicable) and protect the unmodified state of the area and its plant and animal communities. Their purpose is to preserve the capacity of the area to evolve in the absence of significant human interference, and to allow people to enjoy solitude and appropriate self-reliant recreation, which may or may not be commercial.

The department manages natural and cultural heritage, introduced species and fire in wilderness areas as in other parts of the national parks estate, but with special attention to minimising effects on wilderness values.

## **Heritage NSW**

Heritage NSW works with the people of NSW to protect, celebrate and manage the state's heritage.

### **Managing NSW heritage**

We provide approvals for and advice about construction and development that may impact on Aboriginal cultural or environmental heritage. From January to June 2024, we:

- managed 83% of *Heritage Act 1977* (Heritage Act) approvals within required timeframes
- managed 80% of *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) approvals within required timeframes
- processed 160 permit applications under the Heritage Act, supporting \$746 million of development
- processed 525 referrals under the EP&A Act, supporting more than \$3.1 billion of development.

Restoration works on Heathcote Hall were completed in June 2024. The restored buildings and gardens have conserved this Victorian Italianate style building, constructed in 1887. The project's success was due to close collaboration between the Heritage Council, Heritage NSW, the owner and their heritage consultant.

Conservation works were completed at Parliament House, Sydney ahead of the NSW Legislative Council's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary in August 2024, and restoration work began at Katoomba's Paragon Cafe, a much-loved Art Deco building in the Blue Mountains.

Both projects were made possible due to extensive collaboration between Heritage NSW, owners, government and heritage consultants.

## **Protecting NSW heritage**

### *Heritage listings*

Heritage listing on the State Heritage Register (SHR) protects items of particular importance to the state and people of NSW. Items on the SHR can be places, buildings, works, relics, moveable objects or precincts.

There are more than 1,780 items on the SHR, 9 of which were listed from January to June 2024. These include:

- the Fitz Roy Iron Works Precinct, listed in May 2024 – this was the first site in NSW where iron was smelted from native ores and processed for commercial purposes, and it demonstrates the earliest phase of a viable iron industry in Australia
- the Kwong War Chong Building, listed in June 2024 – one of the oldest surviving buildings in Chinatown with connections to the Chinese Australian community.

### *Conserving and respecting Aboriginal cultural heritage*

Repatriation is the return of Aboriginal cultural property, including ancestral human remains, to their relevant community and place of origin, and recognising the rights of Aboriginal people to cultural healing and self-determination.

From January to June 2024, we partnered in the delivery of 5 repatriations of Aboriginal ancestral remains and one collection of objects to their rightful owners and resting places.

In March 2024, we held a cataloguing workshop for the Brian Blake artefact collection, which was repatriated back to the Wellington Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC). Wellington LALC will display parts of this collection in the Maliyan Cultural Centre in Wellington.

Heritage NSW also supports communities throughout NSW to conserve and protect Aboriginal heritage through education, training and site protection. From January to June 2024, we completed 7 conservation projects, including conservation of the Hannibal Hamilton Grave Aboriginal place in Tumut.

## Celebrating NSW heritage

The Blue Plaques program promotes people and stories that have shaped NSW. In 2024, we invited the community to submit recommendations for worthy Blue Plaque recipients in the third nomination round. To date, we have received over 1,000 nominations from 3 nomination rounds.

There are now 42 Blue Plaques unveiled across the state, celebrating writers, business people, campaigners, artists, doctors and more.

## Shaping the future of the heritage system

In January to June 2024, Heritage NSW consulted extensively on the state's first Heritage Strategy. At 81 meetings and workshops, 50 focus groups and 16 interviews, we heard from more than 1,750 people.

## Energy, Climate Change and Sustainability

The department leads the way on climate change, driving the transition to a sustainable economy with net zero greenhouse gas emissions, because it is powered by affordable, reliable and clean energy.

### Achieving net zero

The *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* (the Act) was passed in December 2023, fulfilling an important election commitment for the NSW Government. The Act formalises the state's emissions reduction targets as:

- a 50% reduction from 2005 emissions by 30 June 2030
- a 70% reduction from 2005 emissions by 30 June 2035
- net zero emissions by 30 June 2050.

The Act also requires interim targets for 30 June 2040 and 30 June 2045 to be set through regulation and includes guidance on incorporating NSW resilience and adaptation to climate change principles in future regulations.

Some of our achievements in early 2024 under the Act were as follows.

### *Reducing emissions*

- We established the Net Zero Commission, an independent body to monitor and report on progress in achieving the emissions reduction targets, and advise on ways to achieve these targets.
- In partnership with the NSW Koala Strategy, we launched the \$5 million Living Carbon grants. These grants provide funds to landholders who plant vegetation that removes carbon from the air and provides habitat for koalas.
- Under the High Emitting Industries Program, we prevented half a million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions in 2023–24. This is like taking 300,000 cars off the road for a year or eliminating emissions from more than 50,000 Australian homes.

### *Building climate resilience*

- We delivered climate risk-ready training to more than 100 NSW public service executives and more than 200 staff under the climate risk and resilience strategic roadmap.
- We put climate change risk officers in 11 government departments.
- The Climate Change Network commenced meeting in May 2024, jointly chaired by the department and The Cabinet Office. The network has members from all NSW Government departments. We first completed a sector-wide stocktake of climate change-related government activities that will guide the network's priorities.

### *Building clean energy infrastructure*

- We signed a funding agreement with the Port of Newcastle so they could build a Clean Energy Precinct on Kooragang Island.
- We launched the \$275 million Net Zero Manufacturing initiative to fund the NSW manufacture of clean technology, low carbon materials and renewable energy components.

### **Leading a once-in-a-generation upgrade of the NSW electricity network**

The Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap was created in 2020. It contains steps to upgrade the electricity network to power our state with affordable, clean and reliable energy for everyone.

We are leading delivery of the roadmap. In 2024, we continued to implement it, taking into account the recommendations of the independent Electricity Supply and Reliability Check Up review completed in mid-2023.

An all-of-government effort is also under way to make sure that as coal-fired power stations close, NSW has enough renewable energy, transmission and storage to meet the energy needs of every household, school, hospital, farm and business in the state. We already have enough projects to achieve almost half the minimum required 12 gigawatts of renewable energy generation, and almost a quarter of the minimum required 2 gigawatts of long duration storage, by 2030.

Since January 2024 we have:

- concluded negotiations with Origin Energy to extend the operation of Eraring Power Station until August 2027 to ensure there is enough electricity during the transition
- awarded \$8.4 million in grant funding to TransGrid and the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) to hire more engineers, so they can more quickly establish grid connections for 4 large-scale batteries
- implemented reforms to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Energy Corporation of NSW and AEMO Services in the Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone
- published 2 region-specific First Nations Guidelines, paving the way for more meaningful engagement with Aboriginal communities in the Hunter-Central Coast and South West Renewable Energy Zones

- revised the NSW Electricity Supply Emergency Sub Plan, setting out the process for managing electricity supply disruptions in NSW during emergencies
- held crisis response drills for specific emergency scenarios.

#### *Using regulation to transition to clean energy*

We coordinated:

- the *Energy Legislation Amendment (Clean Energy Future) Act 2024* – this Act strengthens the governance of the Energy Corporation of NSW, and enables it to more easily implement measures to introduce renewable energy
- other amendments in the *Energy Legislation Amendment (Clean Energy Future) Act 2024* to ensure Strategic Benefit Payments made to private landowners hosting new major electricity transmission infrastructure are additional to the compensation payable for compulsory land acquisition under the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991*
- the *Energy Security Corporation Act 2024* – this will establish the Energy Security Corporation that will invest in energy storage projects, and improve the reliability of the electricity network during the transition to renewable energy.

#### *Collaborating to achieve renewable energy*

We are working with other government agencies to ensure that we all have the capabilities, skills and smooth supply chains to transfer to clean energy and progress towards net zero emissions. Actions in 2023–24 included:

- assessing a \$25-million Hydrogen Centre of Excellence grant, and transferring the project’s administration to the NSW Department of Education
- supporting the Minister for Energy and the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education in a 2030 Renewable Energy Workforce Roundtable to discuss renewable energy skills, challenges and opportunities
- working with the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW to empower them to handle complaints from community members affected by the transfer to renewable energy.

#### *Encouraging reduced electricity use and increased green hydrogen production*

We continued to implement measures to help people and organisations save energy, reduce electricity use during peak times and increase the production of green hydrogen under the Energy Security Safeguard. Measures included:

- updating the rules of the Peak Demand Reduction Scheme to provide incentives for residential batteries to reduce peak demand and increase grid stability
- enabling green hydrogen producers to participate in the Renewable Fuel Scheme
- awarding \$2.6 million in contracts through the Energy Savings Scheme to upgrade air conditioning, heat pump hot water and commercial and industrial electrical systems.

## **Encouraging energy affordability**

A priority in 2023–24 was to manage the impact of energy prices on consumers. With the support of more than 40 energy retailers and Service NSW, we delivered:

- \$549 million to approximately 875,000 NSW households and 185,000 small businesses through the National Energy Bill Relief Program, where we partnered with the Australian Government to reduce energy bills for NSW pensioners, low-income households, veterans, seniors, families, carers and small business
- \$282 million to about 1.2 million low-income and vulnerable customers through 6 NSW Government energy rebate programs – the Low Income, Gas, Family, Seniors, Life Support and Medical Energy Rebates programs
- \$30.6 million to approximately 75,000 households through the NSW Government Energy Accounts Payment Assistance scheme, to provide crisis support payments for cost-of-living challenges – we delivered 70% of payments, and more than 200 non-government organisations delivered the remaining 30%.

On 30 June 2024, the temporary cap on the price of coal for NSW power stations concluded. It had been implemented in 2022 to shield consumers from the worst impacts of global coal and gas price increases spurred by global events. We negotiated, implemented and managed the cap as part of the Australian government’s Energy Price Relief Plan.

We partnered with Homes NSW and the Aboriginal Housing Office to implement the \$175 million Social Housing Energy Performance Initiative. This upgrades energy efficiency in about 24,000 social housing homes, which will reduce costs to residents by June 2027.

## *Encouraging energy savings and sustainability*

We are continuing to provide incentives to incorporate energy efficient technology in NSW through varied initiatives such as:

- launching the Vehicle Emissions Star Rating website to help drivers consider sustainability when making their next vehicle purchase
- introducing the Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration initiative, a \$1.4 million trial putting managers in 9 organisations for 12 months to reduce emissions in 68 regional council areas
- completing a NSW Residential Energy Efficiency Baseline project to assess average energy performance of homes built before 2004 – the project involved energy assessments in 1014 private households and 87 social housing dwellings in NSW.

## **Working with the Australian Government**

Our minister and deputy secretary support the Australian Government as the NSW representatives to the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council. This council works on national reforms in energy and climate change. Achievements in 2023–24 included:

- expanding the Capacity Investment Scheme, a national framework to encourage new investment in renewable energy such as wind and solar energy, and battery storage
- introducing an opt-in Orderly Exit Management Framework for the National Electricity Market – this framework will help state and territory governments to manage early retirement of thermal generators to keep the power on and put downward pressure on energy bills for years to come
- an agreement to deliver a \$206 million package for energy saving upgrades in rental properties, and access to solar energy for low-income renters and apartment residents
- the National Consumer Energy Resources Roadmap, which outlines ways in which governments can lower bills, improve reliability and cut network costs by reducing the need for grid-scale investment
- measures responding to the recommendations from the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner’s review of community engagement practices, in close collaboration with the Australian, state and territory governments
- developing National Guidelines for Community Engagement and Benefit for Electricity Transmission Projects in consultation with community groups, energy market bodies, industry groups and First Nations organisations, to establish a nationally consistent best practice approach to transmission developers’ community engagement.

## Water Group

### Developing water strategies

From January to June 2024, the Water Group continued to develop long-term strategies to maintain and build the resilience of the state’s water resources. These strategies will shape water policy, planning and infrastructure decisions for the next 20 to 40 years.

We continued to implement:

- the NSW Water Strategy and NSW Groundwater Strategy
- the Greater Sydney Water Strategy and Lower Hunter Water Security Plan
- the Greater Hunter, Border–Rivers, Gwydir, North Coast, South Coast, Western, Far North Coast, Macquarie–Castlereagh and Namoi regional water strategies.

We also:

- continued to prepare the Lachlan, Murrumbidgee and Murray regional water strategies
- continued to prepare the NSW Aboriginal Water Strategy
- commenced the NSW Climate Change Action Strategy.

### *Developing the Aboriginal Water Strategy*

In 2021, the NSW Government committed \$15 million to develop the Aboriginal Water Strategy (AWS). The AWS supports the NSW Water Strategy's priority to: 'recognise Aboriginal People's rights and values and increase access to and ownership of water for cultural and economic purposes.'

Throughout 2024, we are consulting with Aboriginal people and organisations across NSW to ensure AWS outcomes best reflect Aboriginal community needs.

### *Implementing the Water Group Climate Change Program*

We delivered on NSW Government climate commitments, by developing mitigation and adaptation actions to reduce the impacts of climate change on water management.

## **Improving water resource management**

### *Sharing water and managing water resources effectively*

The Water Group implements the provisions of the *Water Management Act 2000* (WMA) and the Basin Plan 2012 through water resource plans (WRPs) and water sharing plans (WSPs). These plans set the framework for managing water resources, and ensure healthy ecosystems, communities and industries.

By June 2024:

- 16 of the 20 WRPs for NSW had been accredited, with 4 being finalised for resubmission
- 6 inland unregulated river WSPs which expired on 30 June were remade
- several amendments to WSPs were completed.

We developed resources for the review under section 10 of the WMA, including:

- guidance on applying the principles of the Act
- a decision-making framework
- a review of the assurance methodology for future reviews and reporting.

## **Implementing key programs**

### *Enhancing recreational opportunities at Prospect Reservoir*

Following community consultation where people strongly supported developing more water-based and land-based facilities at Prospect Reservoir, we investigated opportunities to increase recreation at the reservoir.

### *Implementing the Safe and Secure Water Program*

The Safe and Secure Water Program reduces risks to water safety and security, by providing sustainable water and wastewater services to regional towns across NSW.

Between January and June 2024, 10 projects supported by \$35 million in Safe and Secure Water grant funding were completed. These included 4 major infrastructure projects:



- Tenterfield Water Treatment Plant Replacement: \$7 million
- Brogo-Bermagui Water Treatment Plant: \$10 million
- Armidale Puddledock Dam Raw Water Transfer System Augmentation: \$5.8 million
- Nyngan Cobar Water Security Project - Design and Construction: \$8.2 million.

### *Replacing Wilcannia Weir*

The proposed \$76.1 million Wilcannia Weir Replacement Project along Darling–Baaka River aims to redesign and rebuild the weir to:

- improve water security for the township of Wilcannia
- enhance cultural community connection to the river
- deliver improved native fish migration.

The Environmental Impact Statement was exhibited in 2022. Concerns about safety, operability and environmental impacts led to a revision in 2023. During 2023–24, the revised design was submitted for community consultation, but did not meet community expectations.

In June 2024, the minister visited Wilcannia and decided to pause the project. An independent review will be conducted into the environmental impacts and the safety and operational concerns that led to the weir’s proposed new design.

### *Conducting the Town Water Risk Reduction Program*

The NSW Government, local water utilities (LWU) and the wider water sector are collaborating to enable LWU to more effectively manage risks and priorities in town water systems. The government has extended the program until June 2025.

The Water Group’s achievements from January to June 2024 included:

- undertaking 10 out of 12 planned intensive site visits to wastewater treatment plants
- identifying operational improvement opportunities
- providing grant funding to 10 LWUs to upgrade and install equipment, including online water quality monitoring
- establishing a workforce composition survey to inform a strategy for the LWU sector to adopt in response to the critical shortage of formally trained water sector workers
- publicly exhibiting a water sector training competency benchmark consultation paper
- onboarding 6 of 14 councils participating in a source water quality improvement program
- commencing 4 dam safety risk reviews out of 14 declared dams
- contributing to the NSW Productivity and Equality Commission’s review of alternative funding models for LWU and the Joint Select Committee’s Parliamentary Inquiry into Protecting LWUs from Privatisation.

### *Continuing non-urban water metering*

We continued to roll out the non-urban water metering framework across NSW. This framework helps water users comply with the rules, and ensures we measure and manage water use fairly and sustainably.

Following a review and public consultation of the metering rules in February 2024, the NSW Government recommendations will be released in August 2024. These recommendations aim to ensure 95% of licensed water taken in NSW is accurately measured by the end of 2026, significantly earlier than predicted.

Recommendations will be implemented in stages. The priority is to first implement actions to improve compliance with the rules. The NSW Government remains committed to a 'no measurement, no pump' approach to ensure that water resources are being managed fairly across the state.

The Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) continues to ensure compliance with the metering rules as they roll out.

## **Implementing regional growth initiatives**

### *Improving water quality in Yass*

A \$13.55 million investment aims to improve water quality for the Yass community by upgrading water treatment infrastructure.

Following approval of the business case, we worked with Yass Valley Council on the next stage of the project. The department will obtain final approvals, and work with the council in preparation to enter into a funding deed to enable a design and construct tender to proceed.

### *Planning regional water security projects*

Planning started on regional water security projects including the Macquarie-Wambuul Water Security Scheme, Belubula Water Security Scheme, Tamworth Advanced Water Recycling, and Tamworth Interconnection Pipeline and River Storages Project.

## **Creating healthier rivers in the Murray-Darling Basin**

### *Reconnecting river country*

The Reconnecting River Country Program aims to create healthier river systems in the Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys. It proposes improving use of environmental water to connect rivers to their wetlands and floodplains.

Works and measures under way to be delivered by December 2026 included:

- Werai forest works and measures
- Niemur-Colligen works and measures
- Mundarlo Bridge works and measures
- Mundowry Lane works and measures.

## **Responding to fish deaths in Menindee Lakes**

On 26 June 2024, the minister released the NSW Government response to the NSW Office of the Chief Scientist and Engineer report into fish deaths in Menindee Lakes. The response included actions to be undertaken to prevent further fish deaths, supported by \$25 million in new funding.

These actions included:

- managing Menindee Lakes flows to maintain good levels of dissolved oxygen for fish
- upgrading water quality monitoring
- exploring funding options with the Australian Government for fish passage projects that enable fish to move through the Darling River and into rivers upstream of Menindee
- improving river connectivity through the Western Regional Water Strategy
- updating water sharing plans
- establishing an expert panel on connectivity in the Barwon–Darling River.

### *Using less environmental water under the Murray–Darling Basin Plan*

Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism Supply projects progressed. These improve environmental outcomes using less water as part of the Murray–Darling Basin Plan.

We worked on 5 projects to remove barriers to delivering higher environmental flows and streamline construction funding. The projects were:

- Millewa and Yanga National Parks projects
- Locks 8&9 project
- Yanco Modernisation project
- Mid-Murray Anabranches project
- Koondrook–Perricoota project.

These projects will contribute to the Basin Plan’s 605 GL environmental water target and reduce the need for Commonwealth voluntary water purchases from farmers in the southern Murray–Darling Basin.

## **Keeping community and stakeholders informed and engaged**

We collaborated with our stakeholders and the community to ensure we managed water resources effectively.

From January to June 2024, we held 782 engagement activities. These included webinars, stakeholder briefings and workshops, virtual meetings, teleconferences and site visits. Key topics included water for Aboriginal people, metropolitan water initiatives, water allocations, environmental water initiatives, infrastructure strategies and policies and water strategies.

We held information sessions, feedback sessions, public exhibitions, face-to-face meetings and workshops. We also engaged with advisory panels.

We established 12 Regional Aboriginal Water Committees. With 123 members, these committees represent Aboriginal communities across the state.

The department received more than 1,452 customer enquiries about water in January to June 2024.

## 3.2 Research and development

The department leads innovative research and development. We work in partnership with other organisations to solve problems, and deliver the best scientific evidence and solutions for NSW and Australia.

We:

- translate and communicate science
- build on knowledge and research through partnerships
- make data publicly available through the [Water Hub](#).

### Dealing with natural hazards

We provide data, information and advice on conservation and managing natural hazards.

We administer the \$8 million [NSW Bushfire and Natural Hazards Research Centre](#) which was launched in early 2023. The research centre enables researchers from 6 universities to collaborate with NSW Government agencies to produce high quality co-designed research and evidence to improve bushfire and natural hazards management.

In 2023–24, the research centre was in its first year of operation. We established the centre and completed the project co-design process, where stakeholders explored knowledge gaps and research needs through workshops and online collaboration.

We also prepared the launching of another dedicated area of the research centre, which will support the recommendations of the NSW Independent Flood Inquiry.

We continued to work with partners across NSW to carry out cultural burning, with 10 burns implemented during 2023–24. We also evaluated programs to measure the biophysical, social, and cultural responses from cultural burning, and assess ways that fire management may affect cultural values.

### Managing the impacts of bushfires on biodiversity

#### *Monitoring populations of greater and yellow-bellied gliders*

We are monitoring distribution and numbers of the greater glider and yellow-bellied glider after the 2019–20 Black Summer bushfires, in collaboration with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and 4 Local Aboriginal Land Councils on the South Coast. The Australian Government has provided funding.

We surveyed 223 sites across NSW across both species' ranges. Sites had various forest types and elevations and differed in how severely they had been affected by fire.

Surveys are being finalised, and will inform ongoing monitoring, including a new research project to investigate the population size of both species on sites according to elevation, forest type and the impact of fire. The project, using drone technology, will also provide a standard methodology to track changes in species' numbers across space and time, and is being conducted with the University of Newcastle.

#### *Researching the long-nosed potoroo, parma wallaby and red-legged pademelon*

We are researching the recovery of the long-nosed potoroo, parma wallaby and red-legged pademelon after the 2019–20 bushfires in northern NSW. We are working out ways recovery relates to fire severity and the presence of predators – foxes, feral cats, wild dogs and dingoes.

#### *Collecting data on priority plants*

We assessed the response of 100 rare or threatened plants to the 2019–20 bushfires through the priority plants project, by collecting data and collating information collected by other organisations. We compared the presence and abundance of plants after the fires to pre-fire information from BioNet and other sources.

#### *Assessing threatened ecological community recovery*

We assessed the recovery of the Blue Mountains Basalt Cap Forest Threatened Ecological Community after the 2019–20 bushfires, by comparing the health of vegetation on certain plots to its state before the fires. We also monitored animals living in the area using wildlife cameras.

### **Dealing with floods**

We delivered the East Coast Flood Recovery Project under the NSW Environment Protection Authority's Recovery Program for Water Quality Monitoring between September 2022 and June 2024. This project:

- established the baseline quality of water in rivers affected by floods, along the NSW coast
- measured the impacts of floods on water quality
- provided information on the recovery of water quality to baseline conditions after the floods.

The NSW Coastal and Flood Data Network provides historical and near real-time flood and estuary water levels, and rainfall, tide, and wave data to the government, emergency services, Bureau of Meteorology, researchers, and the community. The network, funded by the Climate Change Fund, includes:

- 225 flood and estuary water level recording stations
- 75 rainfall monitoring stations
- 20 ocean tide monitoring stations.

### *Leading the Darling Baaka River Health Project*

The department leads the Darling Baaka River Health Project, to determine the river's recovery from flood and mass fish deaths in early 2023. The project, delivered from September 2023 to June 2025:

- monitors a range of river health indicators, including water quality and changes to the river ecosystem
- involves assessment of results by experts, agencies and the community
- shares data on flood recovery, and future research and water management needs for the river system
- has an Aboriginal Knowledge Project, led by the Barkandji Prescribed Body Corporate –this is designed with local Aboriginal groups and knowledge holders to ensure it supports healing Country for those who care for Country.

## Conserving threatened species and ecosystems

### Researching koala conservation

The 10-year NSW Koala Research Plan sets out clear priorities to fill gaps in knowledge of how best to conserve koalas. Research is funded until 2028. In 2023–24, the department continued to support 18 research projects which were funded under the plan.

### Protecting marine habitats through Seabirds to Seascapes

We are leading the NSW Government's Seabirds to Seascapes project to conserve critical marine habitats, with the Sydney Institute of Marine Science, Taronga Conservation Society Australia and the National Parks and Wildlife Service. We are restoring key marine habitat in Sydney Harbour, and surveying penguin and seal populations along the NSW coastline.

This 4-year project receives a \$6.6 million grant from the NSW Environmental Trust and \$2.5 million provided in-kind by project partners.

### Saving our Species

The Saving our Species program assesses the conservation needs of threatened species, and prioritises resources to where they can make the most difference. Some projects Saving our Species funded and acted on in 2023–24 were as follows:

- To support a captive breeding program for endangered coastal emus, we researched ways in which genetics and harmful natural pollutants influenced breeding in the wild population. Results will inform the longer-term captive breeding program, and effective management of the wild population.
- We collaborated with the Royal Botanical Gardens to investigate the best ways of collecting seeds from threatened plant species affected by myrtle rust. This work will also identify plants resistant to myrtle rust to underpin resistance breeding trials.

- We developed a species distribution model to predict whether brush-tailed rock-wallabies were living on any sites with suitable habitat in Kangaroo Valley. Aerial surveys based on the model led to 8 new colonies being discovered.
- We collaborated with Traditional Owners from Gundungurra and Dharawal nations to find out risks from various predators to prey species, including the koala. The project used DNA analysis to identify prey species in predator scats. This information is extending our knowledge of risks from predators, and has added to our understanding of which species live in the area, including threatened and rare species.
- We invested \$3 million from the Department of Customer Service in the ‘Saving our Species Connect’ project. This project involves upgrading the database and reporting systems. In 2023–24, we built the foundations for the project and created a new interface for the database.

### Conserving threatened plants

We established a formal partnership with the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney (RBG) to collect seeds and do genetic analyses for species within Assets of Intergenerational Significance (AIS) in national parks. This partnership supports AIS conservation activities, with seeds kept at the Australian PlantBank, and supplements existing arrangements between RBG and the Saving our Species program.

## Conducting environmental monitoring

### Working on the NSW Biodiversity Indicator Program

The NSW Biodiversity Indicator Program collects, monitors and assesses information on biodiversity and supports the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016.

In 2023–24, we continued to:

- monitor the ongoing effects of industrialisation and development on NSW biodiversity
- conduct recovery actions in response to natural hazards
- drive conservation investment decisions across the state.

### Operating the air quality monitoring network

We continued to operate the largest air quality monitoring network in Australia. The network consists of 95 permanent and 4 temporary stations, and about 100 low-cost air-quality sensors. Data from the network is provided in near real-time through multiple channels and websites, and supports the NSW air quality alert system. The network also delivers key actions to support the NSW Clean Air Strategy 2021–2030, which provides actions to improve air quality and protect communities.

### Researching chemicals in the environment

To protect sensitive ecosystems and human health, and support landholders and government in sustainably managing land and waterways, we researched:

- the fate and impact of chemicals in a range of terrestrial and aquatic environments
- the risk to human health and the environment from contaminants in reused wastes
- chemical threats to wildlife and people.

### **Developing soil, fire research and monitoring strategies**

In 2023–24, we continued to:

- examine the effect of fire, including cultural burning practices, and climate change on soil health
- develop strategies to protect and restore soil health and the ecosystems that soil supports
- provide knowledge and information on eSPADE and SEED.

This information also informs the administration of *State Environmental Planning Policy (Resources and Energy) 2021* and the *Crown Land Management Act 2016*, and changes in salinity for Murray–Darling Basin reporting.

## **Moving to net zero emissions and reducing climate change impacts**

### **Modelling greenhouse gas emissions**

We continue to provide modelling of greenhouse gas emissions for NSW through to 2050. The modelling supports the NSW emissions targets in the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023*. We released updated projections in early 2024 on the [NSW Net Zero Emissions Dashboard](#).

### **Producing climate change projections**

The department leads the NSW and Australian Regional Climate Modelling project (NARClIM), producing climate change projections for local and regional decision makers. During 2023–24, we completed modelling for the latest version of NARClIM, using the most recent global climate models for 2 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change emissions scenarios. The NSW Government is already using NARClIM data for climate risk assessments.

### **Leading the NSW Climate Adaptation Strategy**

As part of the NSW Climate Adaptation Strategy, we are leading scientific research into water, biodiversity, soils and bioclimate, ecosystems and culture, and social and economic knowledge. During 2023–24, we conducted in-depth reviews of the climate change impacts on each element.



## Implementing The Hydrometric Network and Remote Sensing Program

The Hydrometric Network and Remote Sensing Program was established by the Australian Government and NSW Water Group to:

- measure water more accurately
- provide more comprehensive information on water
- improve compliance with the rules by expanding hydrometric networks and using emerging technologies.

By June 2024, the program had:

- established online platforms and internal dashboards to better inform stakeholders and the community about water issues
- contributed to the Murray–Darling Basin Water Information Portal, which combines information from different jurisdictions
- delivered 20 new or upgraded hydrometric gauging stations, and broadscale high-resolution Light Detection and Ranging data.

More advanced analysis, technologies and online information platforms have improved our ability to detect, monitor and manage water resources, and distribute trusted information.

### 3.3 Land disposals

There were no land disposals during the reporting period.

### 3.4 Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal determinations

There were no Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal determinations during the reporting period.

## 4. Management and accountability

### 4.1 Human resources

#### Staff numbers

**Table 10** Number of officers and employees by category 2023–24

Category	Headcount
Ongoing	4,085
Temporary	1,298
Casual	197
Executive	157
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,737</b>

**Note:** For the purposes of annual reporting, data is based on departmental headcount only and does not include related entities or personnel service customers. Exclusions are the Biodiversity Conservation Trust, Dams Safety NSW, Energy Corporation of NSW and NSW Environment Protection Authority.

#### Numbers and remuneration of senior executives

**Table 11** Numbers and remuneration of senior executives 2023–24

Executive band	Female	Male	Total
Band 4 Secretary		1	1
Band 3 Deputy Secretary	2	3	5
Band 2 Executive Director	12	8	20
Band 1 Director	70	61	131
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>157</b>

**Note:** These are senior executive numbers as of 20 June 2024. This data is based solely on senior executives in their substantive role and band level. Exclusions are the Biodiversity Conservation Trust, Dams Safety NSW, Energy Corporation of NSW and NSW Environment Protection Authority.

**Table 12 Average remuneration of senior executives 2023–24**

Executive band	Range (\$)	Average remuneration (\$)
Band 4 Secretary	–	588,250
Band 3 Deputy Secretary	400,000–495,720	456,875
Band 2 Executive Director	292,219–346,640	317,930
Band 1 Director	210,056–287,181	238,868

**Note:** 6.3% of employee-related expenditure in 2023–24 was related to senior executives.

## Consultants

**Table 13 Consultant engagements in 2023–24 costing more than \$50,000**

Consultant	Cost (\$)	Title/nature
Arup Australia Pty Ltd	140,047	Hydrogen and clean energy consultancy for the delivery of the NSW Hydrogen Infrastructure Masterplan.
Deloitte Financial Advisory P/L	180,000	Solar monitoring commercial validation – research, design and implementation.
Deloitte Financial Advisory P/L	88,987	Clean Technology Innovation project development support.
Deloitte Financial Advisory P/L	130,226	Professional services to support the assessment of the low carbon product manufacturing and renewable manufacturing funds grant applications.
ICA Partners	1,559,175	Expert financial advice and transaction manager services for Stage 1b of the Generator Engagement Project.
King & Wood Mallesons	79,553	Advice on Renewable Energy Sector Board (RESB) roadmap implementation, including advice on critical roadmap delivery and implementation risks.
Richard Bolt Consulting Pty Ltd	68,874	Advice on the RESB roadmap implementation, including advice on critical roadmap delivery and implementation risks.
The Customer Experience Company Pty Ltd	61,500	Review of landholder experience in establishing Renewable Energy Zones.
Frontier Economics P/L	94,000	Strategy business case on Water NSW – feasibility study.
AEMO Services	50,000	Long duration storage review for the NSW market.
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,452,362</b>	

**Table 14** Consultant engagements in 2023–24 costing less than \$50,000

Category	Cost (\$)	Number of engagements
Organisational review	61,000	3
Management services	272,069	12
Climate change	95,210	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>428,279</b>	<b>17</b>

## Promotion

### Register of overseas travel

Table 15 shows the overseas travel undertaken by employees and officers from the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water from 1 January to 30 June 2024.

**Table 15** Overseas travel from 1 January to 30 June 2024

Division	Name of officer	Position title	Destination	Purpose of travel	Travel start date	Travel end date
Biodiversity, Conservation and Science	Dean Johnson	Senior Economist	Brussels, Belgium; and France	Attend the European Union Visitors Program 2024	31 May 2024	9 June 2024

For travel undertaken by employees and officers of the Department of Planning and Environment from 1 July to 31 December 2023, see the Department of Planning, Housing & Infrastructure’s annual report 2023–24.

### Register of annual sponsorship commitments

Table 16 details the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water’s sponsorship commitments from 1 January to 30 June 2024.

For details regarding sponsorship commitments of the Department of Planning and Environment from 1 July to 31 December 2023, see the Department of Planning, Housing & Infrastructure’s annual report 2023–24.

**Table 16 Sponsorship details from 1 January to 30 June 2024**

Event date	Sponsorship/event name	Sponsorship amount (\$)	Business unit
3–5 May 2024	Tocal Field Day 2024	6,000	Natural Resources Access Regulator
6–9 May 2024	2024 Country Women’s Association of NSW Annual Conference	4,400	Biodiversity, Conservation and Science

## Personnel services and employment arrangements

The department provided personnel services to the following entities:

1. Biodiversity Conservation Trust
2. Energy Corporation of NSW
3. Dams Safety NSW
4. Environmental Trust
5. Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust
6. Lord Howe Island Board
7. Natural Resources Access Regulator
8. Taronga Conservation Society Australia (Zoological Parks Board of New South Wales)
9. Water Administration Ministerial Corporation

For information regarding these entities, refer to their respective 2023–24 annual reports.

## 4.2 Legislation

### Legislation administered by the agency

The Administrative Arrangements (Minns Ministry – Administration of Acts) Order 2023 provides a list of all Acts administered by the Minister for Climate Change, the Minister for Energy, the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Heritage and the Minister for Water from 5 April 2023.

#### Minister for Climate Change

The Minister for Climate Change administers the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* and has joint administration of all Acts allocated to the Minister for Energy and the Minister for the Environment: see Sch 1, Administrative Arrangements (Minns Ministry – Administration of Acts) Order 2023.

## **Minister for Energy**

*AGL Corporate Conversion Act 2002*

*Electric Vehicles (Revenue Arrangements) Act 2021* (administered jointly with the Treasurer)

*Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020*

*Electricity Supply Act 1995*

*Energy and Utilities Administration Act 1987*

*Energy Security Corporation Act 2024* (This Act was assented to on 24 June 2024, but allocated to the Minister for Energy on 7 August 2024 by the Administrative Arrangements (Administrative Changes – Miscellaneous) Order (No 3) 2024.)

*Energy Services Corporations Act 1995*

*Eraring Power Station Act 1981*

*Gas Industry Restructuring Act 1986*

*Gas Supply Act 1996*

*National Electricity (New South Wales) Act 1997* which adopts the National Electricity (NSW) Law

*National Energy Retail Law (Adoption) Act 2012* which adopts the National Energy Retail Law (NSW)

*National Gas (New South Wales) Act 2008* which adopts the National Gas (NSW) Law

*Northern Rivers County Council (Undertaking Acquisition) Act 1981*

*Pipelines Act 1967*

## **Minister for the Environment**

*Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*

*Brigalow and Nandewar Community Conservation Area Act 2005*

*Coastal Management Act 2016*

*Contaminated Land Management Act 1997*

*Dangerous Goods (Road and Rail Transport) Act 2008* (in so far as it relates to the on-road and on-rail transport of dangerous goods by road or rail)

*Environmental Trust Act 1998*

*Filming Approval Act 2004*

*Forestry Act 2012* (Parts 5A and 5B only, jointly with the Minister for Agriculture)

*Forestry Restructuring and Nature Conservation Act 1995*

*Forestry Revocation and National Park Reservation Act 1996*

*Forestry Revocation and National Parks Reservation Act 1983*

*Forestry Revocation and National Parks Reservation Act 1984*

*Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018*

*Local Government Act 1993 (only Part 2A of Chapter 6)*

*Local Land Services Act 2013 (Part 11 and Divisions 2 and 3 of Part 12, jointly with the Minister for Agriculture)*

*Lord Howe Island Act 1953*

*Marine Estate Management Act 2014 (joint administration with the Minister for Agriculture)*

*National Environment Protection Council (New South Wales) Act 1995*

*National Park Estate (Land Transfers) Act 1998*

*National Park Estate (Lower Hunter Region Reservations) Act 2006*

*National Park Estate (Reservations) Act 2002*

*National Park Estate (Reservations) Act 2003*

*National Park Estate (Reservations) Act 2005*

*National Park Estate (Reservations) Act 2018*

*National Park Estate (Riverina Red Gum Reservations) Act 2010*

*National Park Estate (South-Western Cypress Reservation) Act 2010*

*National Park Estate (Southern Region Reservations) Act 2000*

*National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*

*Ozone Protection Act 1989*

*Pesticides Act 1999*

*Plastic Reduction and Circular Economy Act 2021*

*Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991*

*Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997*

*Protection from Harmful Radiation Act 1990, formerly Radiation Control Act 1990*

*Recreation Vehicles Act 1983 (except Parts 4 and 6)*

*Roads Act 1993 (in so far as it relates to Lord Howe Island and section 252 in so far as it relates to the functions of the Minister for the Environment under the Act)*

*Soil Conservation Act 1938 (Parts 2A, 3 and 4, and sections 15 and 30A in so far as they relate to those Parts, jointly with the Minister for Regional NSW)*

*Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2001*

*Wilderness Act 1987*

*Zoological Parks Board Act 1973*

## **Minister for Heritage**

*Heritage Act 1977*

*National Trust of Australia (New South Wales) Act 1990*

## **Minister for Water**

*Central Coast Water Corporation Act 2006*

*Dams Safety Act 2015*

*Googong Dam Catchment Area Act 1975*

*Hunter Water Act 1991*

*Natural Resources Access Regulator Act 2017*

*New South Wales – Queensland Border Rivers Act 1947*

*Snowy Mountains Cloud Seeding Act 2004*

*Sydney Water Act 1994*

*Water (Commonwealth Powers) Act 2008*

*Water Act 1912*

*Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (New South Wales) Act 2005*

*Water Industry Competition Act 2006 (except Part 3)*

*Water Management Act 2000*

*Water NSW Act 2014*

*Water Supply (Critical Needs) Act 2019*

## **Legal changes**

### **Acts passed**

#### **Principal Acts**

*Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023 No 48*

*Energy Security Corporation Act 2024 No 45*

#### **Amending Acts**

*Energy Legislation Amendment Act 2023 No 49*

*Energy Legislation Amendment (Clean Energy Future) Act 2024 No 41*

*Environmental Legislation Amendment (Hazardous Chemicals) Act 2024 No 10*

*Environment Protection Legislation Amendment (Stronger Regulation and Penalties) Act 2024 No 20*

*National Parks and Heritage Legislation Amendment Act 2024 No 42*

*Radiation Control Amendment Act 2023 No 30*



## **Regulations made**

### ***Principal Regulations***

Gas Supply (Natural Gas Retail) Regulation 2023 (2024–449)

Pipelines Regulation 2023 (2023–450)

Natural Resources Access Regulator Regulation 2023 (2023–473)

Water Management (Murray River Traffic) Regulation 2023 (2023–479)

Water Industry Competition (General) Regulation 2024 (2024–51)

### ***Amending Regulations***

Electricity Infrastructure Investment Amendment (Consumer Trustee and Infrastructure Planner) Regulation 2024 (2024–96)

Electricity Infrastructure Investment Amendment (Network Infrastructure) Regulation 2024 (2024–6)

Electricity Infrastructure Investment Amendment (Performance Audits) Regulation 2023 (2023–601)

Electricity Supply (General) Amendment (Renewable Fuel Scheme) Regulation 2023 (2023–670)

Energy and Utilities Administration Amendment (Inspectors) Regulation 2023 (2023–349)

Protection of the Environment Operations (Waste) Amendment (Mixed Waste Organic Outputs) Regulation 2023 (2023–584)

Protection of the Environment Operations (Waste) Amendment (Waste Facility Contributions) Regulation 2024 (2024–38)

Protection of the Environment Operations (Waste) Amendment (Waste Facility Contributions) Regulation 2024 (No 2) (2024–260)

Radiation Control Amendment Regulation 2023 (2023-565)

Water Industry Competition (General) Amendment (Postponement of Repeal) Regulation 2023 (2023–478)

Water Management (General) Amendment (Access Licence) Regulation 2024 (2024–264)

Water Management (General) Amendment (Floodplain Harvesting Access Licences) Regulation (No 2) 2023 (2023–653)

Water Management (General) Amendment (Joint Private Works) Regulation 2024 (2024–24)

Water Management (General) Amendment (Water Supply Authorities) Regulation 2024 (2024–223)

## Other statutory instruments

### **Management plans**

- 18 water sharing plans

### **Determinations**

- 47 determinations of the Scientific Committee under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*

### **Codes**

- Protected Animal Specimens Code of Practice 2023 (2024–48)

### **Proclamations**

- 8 Proclamations

### **Orders under the Water Management Act 2000**

- Floodplain Management Plan (Flood Enhancement Works) Amendment Order 2024 (2024–218)
- Harvestable Rights (central inland-draining catchments) Order 2023 (2023–542)
- Harvestable Rights (coastal-draining catchments) Order 2023 (2023–543)
- Water Management Amendment (Private Water Corporations) Order 2024 (2024–52)
- Access Licence Dealing Principles (Interstate Assignments) Order 2023 (No 2) (2023–497)
- Access Licence Dealing Principles (Special Areas No.2) Amendment Order 2023 (2023–649)

## Significant judicial decisions

### **NRAR prosecution – Commercial farming company and director found guilty of charges arising from illegal dams**

On 1 March 2023, the Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) instituted proceedings against a commercial farming company and one of its directors before the Local Court of NSW, for offences arising from the construction and use of dams without approval.

The dams were on a property used for commercial farming in the Kempsey region. The offences were alleged to have occurred between about 6 October 2016 and 25 February 2021.

On 25 June 2024, the court found the defendants guilty of all substantive charges and dismissed alternative charges.

During the hearing, among other arguments, the defence submitted that the water in the dams was collected off greenhouse roofs, and therefore fell outside the state's water rights as per s 392 of the *Water Management Act 2000* (WM Act). The court clarified that s 392 of the WM Act is 'solely concerned with vesting in the Crown the

State's water rights'. It does not prevent a prosecutor from proving an offence under s 91B of the WM Act, including when the water in question was collected from a roof.

The proceedings have been listed for sentence in November 2024.

### **National Parks Association of NSW Inc v Minister for Environment and Heritage [2023] NSWLEC 149**

The National Parks Association commenced Class 4 judicial review proceedings against the Minister for the Environment in the Land and Environment Court of NSW. The proceedings challenged the decision of the former minister to adopt an amendment to the *Plan of Management for the Kosciuszko National Park* which enabled the construction of above ground transmission works. On 22 December 2023, the court dismissed the proceedings and confirmed the validity of the amendment to the plan of management.

The court held that the minister could take into account considerations under s 72AA(1) of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* from the moment the minister instructed the Secretary to prepare an amendment to the plan until the minister adopted the amendment on 1 September 2022. The court also found that the Secretary took into account s 72AA(1) considerations before, as well as after, public exhibition.

### **Neilson v Secretary, Department of Planning and Environment [2024] NSWCA 28**

On 21 February 2024, the NSW Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal against a decision of the Land and Environment Court of NSW. The Land and Environment Court had dismissed Mr Neilson's proceedings requiring the Secretary to implement parts of the plan of management for Mimososa Rocks National Park, relating to the upgrade of 2 roads.

A key issue was whether the plan of management required the Secretary to manage and maintain certain sections of road in the national park in accordance with s 81 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act) so Mr Neilson could have all-weather access by car to his commercial oyster lease outside the national park.

In dismissing the appeal, the majority of the court confirmed that the duty under s 81 of the NPW Act was to give effect to the plan of management as a whole. There is no obligation to always meet all desired outcomes of the plan of management, or any timeframe for achieving any specific outcome in the plan. The plan contained competing priorities, so the Secretary had discretion in how to pursue these.

### **Chief Executive of the Office of Environment and Heritage v Turnbull [2023] NSWLEC 137**

Mr Grant Wesley Turnbull was prosecuted in the Land and Environment Court of NSW for illegally clearing 508 hectares of native vegetation on his property near Moree, contrary to s 12(2) of the now-repealed *Native Vegetation Act 2003*. The clearing took place between January and August 2014. The proceedings were commenced on 15 April 2016, and Mr Turnbull entered a plea of guilty in February 2023 after several appeals to the Court of Criminal Appeal.

On 8 December 2023, the sentencing Court found that Mr Turnbull's actions, which involved clearing 508 hectares to transform grazing land into crop land, were reckless and resulted in significant environmental harm.

This was the third tranche of clearing on the property, with previous tranches resulting in convictions of both Mr Turnbull and his father. Mr Turnbull was fined \$405,000 (reduced from \$450,000 on account of his plea of guilty) and was ordered to pay the prosecutor's legal costs.

### **Secretary, Department of Planning and Environment v Khouzame [2024] NSWLEC 54**

Ms Chaza Khouzame was prosecuted in the Land and Environment Court of NSW for unlawfully clearing 5 hectares of native vegetation on her property in Canyonleigh, contrary to s 60N(1) of the *Local Land Services Act 2013*. The clearing took place in 2021 and 2022. The cleared land was home to trees more than 200 years old as well as 54 species of native trees, plants, shrubs and grasses. The cleared trees included food trees for the endangered koala, and habitat for the vulnerable gang-gang cockatoo and yellow-bellied glider.

Ms Khouzame entered an early guilty plea for the offence.

On 22 May 2024, the court found that this serious offence had caused substantial environmental harm. Ms Khouzame was convicted and fined \$135,000 (reduced from \$180,000 on account of her early guilty plea). The defendant was also ordered to pay the prosecutor's legal costs.

This was the first time that the Land and Environment Court of NSW had sentenced a person for this offence.

### **Aerotropolis Pty Ltd v Secretary, Department of Planning and Environment [2023] NSWCCA 195**

On 19 June 2023, the NSW Court of Appeal (CoA) dismissed an appeal against an interlocutory decision of the Land and Environment Court of NSW and confirmed that a prosecution was commenced within the relevant limitation period. Special leave to appeal to the High Court against this decision was refused.

The Appellant was the Defendant in a prosecution for biodiversity conservation related offences under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act) and the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act).

The CoA considered whether the lower court erred in finding that the prosecution was commenced within the timeframe, and found in favour of the prosecutor.

In dismissing the appeal, the CoA unanimously found that the limitation period provisions in both the NPW Act and BC Act precluded counting the date on which evidence of the alleged offence first came to the attention of an authorised officer when calculating the limitation period for the offence. The appeal CoA also found s 36(2) of the *Interpretation Act 1987* applied to the relevant limitation period provisions. As a result, proceedings which commenced on a Tuesday after a public holiday on

Monday were commenced within the timeframe, where the limitation period expired on the preceding Saturday.

### **Ramsay v Minister for Lands and Water, Hospitality and Racing, the Minister administering the Water Management Act 2000 [2023] NSWCA 299**

On 12 December 2023, the NSW Court of Appeal (CoA) dismissed an appeal against a decision of the Land and Environment Court of NSW.

The CoA's decision confirmed that the Land and Environment Court of NSW does not have the jurisdiction to review determinations made by the minister under s 57A of the *Water Management Act 2000* (WM Act) and clause 23K of the Water Management (General) Regulation 2018, to issue floodplain harvesting licences with specified share components on their merits.

In dismissing the appeal, the CoA found that s 368 of the WM Act did not confer a merits appeal right in relation to the determinations, as no application had been refused and the specification of the number of unit shares in a floodplain harvesting access licence was not a condition of the licence, discretionary or otherwise.

## **4.3 Risk management and insurance activities**

### **Risk management and business continuity management**

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water was established on 1 January 2024. The department maintains a risk management framework, which:

- contains a consistent and systematic process to manage risks
- provides the principles and tools to manage risk
- is aligned with the risk management standard (ISO 31000:2018) and the NSW Treasury Internal Audit and Risk Management Policy for the General Government Sector (TPP20-08).

The department uses an enterprise governance, risk and compliance (EGRC) system which provides a single platform to monitor, update and report on enterprise risks, audit, compliance, and external reporting records. During 2023–24, the department received support from the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure to ensure effective risk management following machinery of government changes.

Over the past year, the department made progress in managing and adapting to climate risk. The Climate Change Risk Officer (CCRO) role was established to integrate climate risk in decision-making processes throughout the department. The CCRO maintains working relationships with other CCROs in the public sector, which supports consistency and collaboration throughout the NSW Government.

The department's Business Continuity Management (BCM) process is based on ISO22301:2019 and includes comprehensive documents to prepare for, and respond to, incidents and events that impact on critical business operations. During the reporting

period, the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure supported the department to ensure effective BCM practices following government changes.

The department maintained individual business continuity plans for 16 critical teams, a department-wide Crisis Management Response Plan, and associated People, IT, Legal, Buildings and Stakeholder Communications response plans.

Supported by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, the department also implemented a business continuity exercise program and conducted a targeted business continuity exercise to help build capability amongst staff, clarify responsibilities and validate recovery and response measures.

## Insurance activities

The department is insured through the Treasury Managed Fund. The department's insurance policy includes cover for property, liability, motor vehicles, workers compensation and miscellaneous issues.

**Table 17 Property category: Summary of insurance claims paid by the Treasury Managed Fund in 2023–24**

Policy number	Policy/agency name	Number of claims	Sum of net incurred cost <sup>1</sup> (\$)	Sum of amount paid <sup>2</sup> (\$)	Sum of latest estimate <sup>3</sup> (\$)	Sum of amount recovered from third party <sup>4</sup> (\$)
MF101140	DCCEEW – Water	1	774.95	\$774.95	0.00	0.00
MF100922	Environment and Heritage	2	302,922.28	302,922.28	0.00	0.00
MF100353	Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust	2	9,555,000.00	1,018,094.95	8,536,905.05	304,390.93
MF100178	National Parks and Wildlife Service	186	6,671,589.05	1,311,797.29	5,360,766.19	974.43
MF700408	National Parks and Wildlife Service – Roads	15	10,997,902.00	232,793.00	10,765,109.00	0.00
<b>Subtotals</b>		<b>206</b>	<b>27,528,188.28</b>	<b>2,866,382.47</b>	<b>24,662,780.24</b>	<b>305,365.36</b>

**Notes:**

Data sourced from iCare Insurance for NSW as of 31 July 2024 for claims made in the 2023–24 financial year  
DCCEEW = Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Numbered columns:

1. Sum of net incurred cost: total estimate on the claim at the time it is submitted to iCare (initial reserve raised by Gallagher Bassett)
2. Sum of amount paid: amount paid on the claim to date
3. Sum of latest estimate
4. Sum of amount recovered from third party: amount recovered from third party on the claim to date

**Table 18 Liability category: summary of insurance claims paid by the Treasury Managed Fund in 2023–24**

Policy number	Policy/agency name	Number of claims	Sum of net incurred cost <sup>1</sup> (\$)	Sum of amount paid <sup>2</sup> (\$)	Sum of latest estimate <sup>3</sup> (\$)	Sum of amount recovered from third party <sup>4</sup> (\$)
MF702018	DCCEEW	1	90,000.00	85,497.65	4,502.35	0.00
MF101138	DCCEEW – Water	2	111,067.00	1,067.00	110,000.00	0.00
MF10086	Environment and Heritage	1	650,000.00	10,385.11	639,614.89	0.00
	2					
MF100177	National Parks and Wildlife Service	20	2,449,298.18	152,561.02	2,296,899.83	162.67
<b>Subtotals</b>		<b>24</b>	<b>3,300,365.18</b>	<b>249,510.78</b>	<b>3,051,017.07</b>	<b>162.67</b>

Notes: see Table 17 above

**Table 19 Miscellaneous category: Summary of insurance claims paid by the Treasury Managed Fund in 2023–24**

Policy number	Policy/agency name	Number of claims	Sum of net incurred cost <sup>1</sup> (\$)	Sum of amount paid <sup>2</sup> (\$)	Sum of latest estimate <sup>3</sup> (\$)	Sum of amount recovered from third party <sup>4</sup> (\$)
MF101141	DCCEEW – Water	1	550.00	550.00	0.00	0.00
MF100179	National Parks and Wildlife Service	6	14,969.34	13,764.34	1,205.00	0.00
MF100444	National Parks and Wildlife Service – Fire Fighting Fund	34	9,058,230.35	5,020,845.55	4,037,384.80	0.00
<b>Subtotals</b>		<b>41</b>	<b>9,073,749.69</b>	<b>5,035,159.89</b>	<b>4,038,589.80</b>	<b>0.00</b>

Notes: see Table 17 above



## Internal audit and risk management attestation statement 2023–24

I, Anthony Lean, Secretary, am of the opinion that the Department of Climate Change, Energy the Environment and Water has internal audit and risk management processes in operation that are compliant with the seven (7) Core Requirements set out in the *Internal Audit and Risk Management Policy for the General Government Sector*, specifically:

### Core Requirements

#### Risk Management Framework

- |     |   |                  |
|-----|---|------------------|
| 1.1 | The Accountable Authority shall accept ultimate responsibility and accountability for risk management in the agency.  | <b>Compliant</b> |
| 1.2 | The Accountable Authority shall establish and maintain a risk management framework that is appropriate for the agency. The Accountable Authority shall ensure the framework is consistent with AS ISO 31000:2018. | <b>Compliant</b> |

#### Internal Audit Function

- |     |  |                  |
|-----|--|------------------|
| 2.1 | The Accountable Authority shall establish and maintain an internal audit function that is appropriate for the agency and fit for purpose.                                    | <b>Compliant</b> |
| 2.2 | The Accountable Authority shall ensure the internal audit function operates consistent with the International Standards for the Professional Practice for Internal Auditing. | <b>Compliant</b> |
| 2.3 | The Accountable Authority shall ensure the agency has an Internal Audit Charter that is consistent with the content of the 'model charter'.                                  | <b>Compliant</b> |

#### Audit and Risk Committee

- |     |   |                  |
|-----|---|------------------|
| 3.1 | The Accountable Authority shall establish and maintain efficient and effective arrangements for independent Audit and Risk Committee oversight to provide advice and guidance to the Accountable Authority on the agency's governance processes, risk management and control frameworks, and its external accountability obligations. | <b>Compliant</b> |
| 3.2 | The Accountable Authority shall ensure that the Audit and Risk Committee has a Charter that is consistent with the 'model charter'.   | <b>Compliant</b> |

#### Membership

The independent chair and members of the Department's interim Audit and Risk Committee are:

Role	Name	Start Term Date	Finish Term Date
Independent Chair	Penny Hutchinson	1 January 2024	30 September 2024
Independent Member	Brian Blood	1 January 2024	30 September 2024
Independent Member	Julie Elliott	1 January 2024	30 September 2024

#### Shared Arrangements 2023-2024

I, Anthony Lean, Secretary, advise that for the period 1 January 2024 – 30 June 2024 the Department of Climate Change, Energy the Environment and Water entered into an approved shared arrangement comprising the following:

- NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy the Environment and Water
- NSW Environmental Trust and
- Lord Howe Island Board.

The resources shared included the Audit and Risk Committee, the Chief Audit Executive and the internal audit function. The shared Audit and Risk Committee is a Principal Department Led Shared Audit and Risk Committee.

In addition, the Audit and Risk Committee provided oversight of the financial statements for the:

- Water Administration Ministerial Corporation.



Anthony Lean  
Secretary

9 August 2024

Date

#### Agency Contact:

Geoff Campbell  
Director, Audit and Ethics

## 4.4 Additional matters for inclusions

### Access to information

As required by section 7(3) of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (GIPA Act) and clause 8(a) of the *Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2018* (GIPA Regulation), the department and agencies have reviewed their program for the release of government information to identify the kinds of information that can be made publicly available.

The department looks at information which has been proactively released. It also looks at departmental staff's level of awareness of proactive release under the GIPA Act.

The department's annual survey, conducted in August 2024 for the 2023–24 financial year, revealed a diverse range of information had been released and staff had a high level of awareness. Information and reports about programs were released on the department's website, X (Twitter), e-newsletters, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram accounts. There was also increasing use of the NSW Government's SEED portal – the central resource for sharing environmental data in NSW. The department's Water group, for example, used the SEED portal to release datasets that improve the availability of water data.

#### Examples of data proactively released under the GIPA Act on the SEED portal

- [NSW Aridity Index](#)
- [Water Hub](#)
- [NSW post-fire debris flow susceptibility map](#)

#### Examples of information released under the GIPA Act on the departmental website

- [Darling–Baaka River Smart Buoy Network real time water quality data dashboard](#)
- [NSW aridity index factsheet](#)
- [Water science data and modelling](#)
- [Hydrogen hubs in NSW](#)
- [Managing wild horse impacts in national parks](#)
- [Dustwatch publications](#)
- [NSW annual air quality statement 2023](#)
- [Koala research and monitoring](#):
- [Kangaroo management in NSW – annual program report](#)

#### Statistical information on access applications

The department came into existence on 1 January 2024. Before this, its functions were part of the former Department of Planning and Environment. The department was supported during this reporting period by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure following machinery of government changes. The statistical information below is therefore limited to the period 1 January to 30 June 2024. Statistical

information for 1 July to 31 December 2023 is included in the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's annual report.

Between 1 January and 30 June 2024, the department received 77 access applications under section 9 of the GIPA Act, not including 3 invalid applications (see table 20 below), in addition to 14 applications that had already been received before 1 January 2024.

Refer to tables 20 to 28 below for details on the matters the department dealt with.

Note that the departmental network includes public sector entities that are considered a subsidiary agency under Schedule 3 of the GIPA Regulation. The network also includes public sector entities that have authorised the department to make decisions about access applications on their behalf. Statistical information for these entities is included in the aggregated data in the tables below.

**Table 20** Number of applications by type of applicant and outcome\*

Type of applicant	Access granted in full	Access granted in part	Access refused in full	Information not held	Information already available	Refuse to deal with application	Refuse to confirm/deny whether information is held	Application withdrawn	Total
Media	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	4
Members of Parliament	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private sector businesses	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	5
Not-for-profit organisations or community groups	1	4	1	2	1	0	0	1	10
Members of the public (application by legal representative)	3	4	0	6	1	1	0	1	16
Members of the public (other)	11	16	3	8	0	3	0	1	42
<b>Total*</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>77</b>

**Note:** \* More than one decision can be made for an access application. If this is the case, a recording must be made of each decision.

**Table 21**      **Number of applications by type of application and outcome**

Type of application	Access granted in full	Access granted in part	Access refused in full	Information not held	Information already available	Refuse to deal with application	Refuse to confirm/deny whether information is held	Application withdrawn	Total
Personal information applications *	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Access applications (other than personal information applications)	17	26	4	16	1	3	0	5	72
Access applications that are partly personal information applications and partly other	2	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>77</b>

**Note:** \* A **personal information application** is an application for access to personal information (as defined in clause 4 of Schedule 4 to the GIPA Act) about the applicant (the applicant being an individual).

**Table 22 Invalid applications**

Reason for invalidity	Number of applications
Application does not comply with formal requirements (s 41 of the Act)	9
Application is for excluded information of the agency (s 43 of the Act)	0
Application contravenes restraint order (s 110 of the Act)	0
<b>Total number of invalid applications received</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Invalid applications that subsequently became valid applications</b>	<b>7</b>

**Table 23 Conclusive presumption of overriding public interest against disclosure: matters listed in Schedule 1 to GIPA Act**

Type of information	Number of times consideration used*
Overriding secrecy laws	0
Cabinet information	3
Executive Council information	0
Contempt	2
Legal professional privilege	5
Excluded information	0
Documents affecting law enforcement and public safety	0
Transport safety	0
Adoption	0
Care and protection of children	0
Ministerial code of conduct	0
Aboriginal and environmental heritage	0
Information about complaints to Judicial Commission	0
Information about authorised transactions under <i>Electricity Network Assets (Authorised Transactions) Act 2015</i>	0

Type of information	Number of times consideration used*
Information about authorised transaction under <i>Land and Property Information NSW (Authorised Transaction) Act 2016</i>	0

**Note:** \* More than one public interest consideration may apply to a particular access application. In this case, each consideration must be recorded, but only once per application.

**Table 24 Other public interest considerations against disclosure: matters listed in table to section 14 of GIPA Act**

Matter	Number of occasions when application not successful *
Responsible and effective government	13
Law enforcement and security	6
Individual rights, judicial processes and natural justice	21
Business interests of agencies and other persons	8
Environment, culture, economy and general matters	1
Secrecy provisions	0
Exempt documents under interstate Freedom of Information legislation	0

**Note:** \* More than one public interest consideration may apply to a particular access application. In this case, each consideration must be recorded, but only once per application.

**Table 25 Timelines**

Timeframe	Number of applications
Decided within the statutory timeframe (20 days plus any extensions)	77
Decided after 35 days (by agreement with applicant)	2
Not decided within time (deemed refusal)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>



**Table 26** Number of applications reviewed under Part 5 of the Act (by type of review and outcome)

Type of review and outcome	Decision varied	Decision upheld	Total
Internal review	0	1	1
Review by Information Commissioner*	0	3	3
Internal review following recommendation under s 93 of Act	1	0	1
Review by NCAT	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>

**Note:** \* The Information Commissioner does not have the authority to vary decisions but can make recommendations to the original decision-maker. The data in this case indicates that the Information Commissioner has made a recommendation to vary or uphold the original decision.

**Table 27** Applications for review under Part 5 of the Act (by type of applicant)

Type of applicant	Number of applications for review
Applications by access applicants	6
Applications by persons to whom information the subject of access application relates (see s 54 of the Act)	0

**Table 28** Applications transferred to other agencies under Division 2 of Part 4 of the Act (by type of transfer)

Type of transfer	Number of applications transferred
Agency-initiated transfers	1
Applicant-initiated transfers	1

## Compliance with the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (PPIP Act)

Under NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines – Annual Reporting Requirements TPG23-10, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water must provide a statement of its actions to comply with the requirements of the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (PPIP Act). It must also provide statistical details of any reviews conducted by or on behalf of the agency, under Part 5 of the PPIP Act.

The department came into existence on 1 January 2024. Before this, its functions were part of the former Department of Planning and Environment. The department was supported during the reporting period by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure following the machinery of government changes.

The department's privacy management plan outlines how it complies with the principles of the PPIP Act and the *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002*. Online privacy statements on the department's various branded websites help the public to know how their information is collected and used in specific circumstances.

Officers in the department's Information Access & Privacy unit also provide advice and training to departmental staff. In 2024, the department participated as a privacy champion during Privacy Awareness Week.

Privacy by design is strongly encouraged in the department. The Information Access & Privacy unit engages with the diverse parts of the department through policies and procedures. These include the Code of Conduct & Ethics and internal intranet information about handling personal information. Internal resources, such as department-specific templates for privacy impact assessments and privacy risk assessments, better help our internal stakeholders identify when they need to build privacy measures into their projects and procedures. Improvement in the standard privacy clauses in contracts with third-party vendors has increased knowledge, and visibility, of the need for robust privacy controls.

With the implementation in November 2023 of a new mandatory data breach notification scheme for NSW government agencies, the department has implemented:

- a privacy (data) breach policy
- privacy breach procedures, with a short-form version included in the privacy management plan
- internal guidance resources for staff to recognise when a privacy breach may have occurred
- new reporting tools so staff can quickly and easily report any potential privacy breach to the Information Access & Privacy unit for triaging and management under the new scheme.

## Details of reviews under Part 5

The department received 5 applications under section 53 of the PPIP Act. In one case, the department found no evidence of any breach of privacy. In 3 cases, the department confirmed a minor privacy breach. Recommendations were made for improving processes to prevent future similar breaches.

In one case, the department confirmed a privacy breach had occurred and that it was of a medium level of risk to the affected person. The breach occurred when a personnel file was placed on the department's electronic document management system. Although access was limited to departmental staff, there were no controls to limit who, within the department, could view the file.

A formal apology was issued to the staff member involved, the files were locked down to appropriate access only, and the practices of the business unit involved were subject to further investigation to identify the cause of the breach.

## Eligible data breaches

Under Part 6A of the PPIP Act, if a privacy breach is likely to result in serious harm to an individual, it becomes an eligible data breach and must be dealt with under the provisions of Part 6A.

Since the implementation of the provisions of Part 6A on 28 November 2023, the department was subject to one eligible data breach. The breach occurred when 2 new staff members were onboarded, and a previous employee's completed form was emailed to 1 new staff member by accident. The affected person was notified, as was the NSW Privacy Commissioner. Internal processes were reviewed and amended to minimise the risk of a future similar incident occurring.

## Standing Order 52

Under Standing Order 52 (SO52), the Parliament of NSW can order executive government papers to be produced.

During the reporting period, 5 orders for papers were passed by the Legislative Council that required the department to produce documents. The scope of orders required the production of differing numbers of documents, from few to thousands.

The department was created on 1 January 2024. The following table shows the orders for papers the department finalised since its inception and the number of documents produced, with printing costs for each.

Documents finalised before 1 January 2024 are reported in the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's annual report.

**Table 29 Orders received, and number and cost of documents produced**

<b>Subject matter</b>	<b>Date passed</b>	<b>Number of documents</b>	<b>Printing cost (\$)</b>
Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan	29/11/2023*	11,526	4,670.13
Albury Hospital redevelopment – further order	7/2/2024	Nil	Nil
Sites in and around Captains Flat, Molonglo River and Bungendore	13/3/2024	20	21.24
Closure and extension of Eraring Power Station	15/5/2024	62	172.43
Closure and extension of Eraring Power Station – further order	5/6/20204	1	7.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>11,609</b>	<b>4,871.13</b>

**Notes:**

Costs include printing costs only and do not include legal costs or the cost of internal staff resources.

\*As the SO52 related to matters that were part of the functions of the department, the department produced the documents in response to the SO52, including a number of supplementary productions in 2024.

## Other information

An editor was engaged to assist in the preparation of this report for a total cost of \$7,098.

## 5. Sustainability

### 5.1 Actions under the *Modern Slavery Act 2018*

In 2023–24, the department implemented the following measures to guard against modern slavery, in line with the provisions of the *Modern Slavery Act 2018*:

- embedded modern slavery information and risk assessment in the procurement system
- introduced a modern slavery risk-reducing procurement strategy that included a risk assessment
- included modern slavery contract clauses in template agreements and relevant systems
- continued to engage with and educate staff about modern slavery in procurement, through the community of practice and intranet
- continued to assess modern slavery risks of potential suppliers through the Inherent Risk Identification Tool.

Throughout the reporting period for 2023–24, the NSW Anti-Slavery Commissioner did not identify any issues.

### 5.2 Diversity and inclusion

#### Workforce diversity

The department is following the former Department of Planning and the Environment's Diversity and Inclusion Workforce Strategy 2021–25 until it creates its own diversity and inclusion action plans. The strategy focuses on:

- attracting and retaining diverse talent
- fostering an inclusive and fair workplace culture
- ensuring leadership is accountable and promotes diversity.

#### Aboriginal people

The department has continued its strategies to:

- improve cultural capability, consciousness and safety across the workforce
- grow Aboriginal career pathways
- increase the representation of Aboriginal people.

Some successes of 2023–24 were:

- the Aboriginal school-based traineeship program attracted 23 students, 12 of which were placed in field based environmental roles – once they complete their traineeship at the end of 2024, they will be considered for transition to ongoing roles

- Aboriginal employment and cultural safety modules were developed and delivered to 200 staff to share culturally inclusive methods and increase knowledge
- the Nguluway mentoring program gained 80 participants, with 40 Aboriginal staff mentoring 40 others in a culturally safe partnership
- the Senior Leaders Aboriginal mentoring program matching senior leaders with an Aboriginal mentor was elevated to a public sector wide initiative which attracted 68 pairs
- more than 500 staff completed the Winanga-Li Cultural Capability course, which supports the department's commitment to the National Agreement on the Closing the Gap Priority Reform Agenda.

### **People with disability**

The department is establishing our own Disability Inclusion Action Plan. To improve inclusion for people with disability in 2023–24, we:

- supported the Disability Employee Network, increasing membership by 80
- established an online peer support group for neurodivergent employees, with 178 members
- held a career progression workshop in May 2024 to address barriers for people with disability
- worked with the Australian Network on Disability to create an action plan to support people with disabilities.

### *Training programs*

The department worked on training programs to improve staff awareness of disability, and support inclusion. Over 500 staff participated in the following training programs:

- KnowledgAbility: training on types of disabilities and support
- senior leader training: removing barriers for people with disabilities to make it easier for them to become senior leaders
- neurodiversity awareness: training on autism and ADHD (attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder) awareness, with lived experience facilitators.

### *Recruitment*

The department has progressed programs to recruit people with disabilities, including:

- ElevateAbility: a program supporting employees and managers during recruitment
- gaining Disability Confident Recruiter status through the Australian Disability Network
- implementing 3 disability target roles to help coordinate diversity and inclusion plans.

## *Inclusion*

The department is represented on the NSW Government Disability Cross-Sector Review working group. As part of this group, the department has:

- provided feedback and input into the 8 recommendations to be adopted across the NSW public sector
- co-designed sector-wide communication guidance on disability inclusion with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure and the Australian Disability Network, which should be completed by the end of 2024.

## *Events*

In February 2024, the department had an online panel discussion and ran a video campaign to support the launch of disability inclusion resources.

For the International Day of People with Disability, the department promoted the Public Service Commission's event on disability inclusion.

## *Accessibility*

The department continued to enhance disability inclusion in system and process improvements, and liveable community outcomes.

The department continued to support workplace adjustments passports, establishing adjustments so employees could do their jobs successfully. In 2023–24, 421 workplace adjustment passports were approved and implemented. Of these, 15% were disability related, 20% were due to illness, 15% were due to injury, 8% were due to physical attributes and 17% were related to other causes.

The department is reviewing its workplace adjustments processes to improve experiences of employees with a disability who need adjustments.

## **Multicultural workforce**

The department supports the multicultural staff network, Culture Connect, which grew to 340 members and gained an executive sponsor in 2023–24.

On 21 March 2024, the department celebrated the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination with:

- cultural diversity training for all staff and senior executives
- 'Cultural Diversity Check-In Cuppa' activities a 'You Can Ask That' panel discussing biases and barriers.

The department continues to participate in Foorsah, an employment program for refugees.

## **LGBTQIA+ staff**

The department supports the LGBTQIA+ staff network, Rainbow Connection. Network members meet monthly and have a bi-monthly newsletter. In 2023–24, network members:

- supported the National Parks and Wildlife Rainbow burn
- celebrated key days like Wear It Purple Day, World Aids Day, and IDAHOBIT
- delivered LGBTQIA+ inclusion training to 144 employees, with 80% recommending it.

## **Gender equality**

The department is preparing its Gender Equity Action Plan (GEAP) as part of the NSW Women's Strategy 2023–26. Initiatives to support improvement in gender equality in 2023–24 included the following.

Keeping in Touch is a program that helps parents navigate parental leave, using a service provided by Grace papers. The program has 386 members. Regarding membership, 77% of members are female, 22% are male and 1% prefer not to say.

In 2023–24, there was:

- a subscription increase of 33% for the coaching platform
- a 25% increase for on demand coaching sessions
- a 52% increase in participation in live coaching
- a 8% increase in masterclasses.

The Women NSW's Perimenopause and Menopause Toolkit was promoted through our online channels.

Domestic Violence Awareness Prevention Training was conducted for staff, facilitated by The Family Co.

For International Women's Day, the department held a live panel event on the theme 'Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress.'

## **Carers and older workers**

The department supports the NSW Carer's Strategy 2020–2030, and the 2023–24 Action Plan which creates resources for a departmental plan for carers.

We also back the Ageing Well in NSW Seniors Strategy 2021–2031, and will develop a multigenerational action plan to support it.

## **Membership**

The department shared joint membership of Diversity Council Australia (DCA) and has gold membership with the Australian Disability Network (ADN).

## **Staff networks and executive champions**

The department continues to support 8 staff networks and has endorsed the establishment of a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Group to support the creation of diversity and inclusion action plans. These include the:

- Disability Inclusion Action Plan
- Gender Equality Action Plan
- Multicultural Action Plan.



**Table 30 Trends in the representation of workforce diversity groups**

Workforce diversity group	Benchmark	2024
Women	50% <sup>1</sup>	50.4%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people <sup>2</sup>	3.3%	7.1%
People whose first language spoken as a child was not English	23.2% <sup>3</sup>	12.5%
People with disability	5.6% <sup>4</sup>	2.6%
People with disability requiring work-related adjustment	N/A	0.4%

**Notes:**

1. The benchmark of 50% for representation of women across the sector reflects the gender composition of the NSW community.
2. The NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2019–2025 sets a target of 3% Aboriginal employment at each non-executive grade of the public sector by 2025.
3. A benchmark from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing has been included for people whose first language spoken as a child was not English. The census does not provide information about first language but does provide information about country of birth. The benchmark of 23.2% is the percentage of the NSW population born in a country where English is not the first language.
4. In December 2017, the NSW Government announced it would double the representation of people with disability in the NSW public sector from an estimated 2.7% to 5.6% by 2027.

The benchmark for 'People with disability requiring work-related adjustment' was not updated.

**Table 31 Trends in the distribution index for workforce diversity groups**

Workforce diversity group	Benchmark <sup>1,2</sup>	2024
Women	100	107
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	100	75
People whose first language spoken as a child was not English	100	108
People with disability	100	102
People with disability requiring work-related adjustment	100	101

**Notes:**

1. A distribution index score of 100 indicates that the distribution of members of the workforce diversity group across salary bands is like that of the rest of the workforce. A score less than 100 means that members of the workforce diversity group are more concentrated at lower salary bands than other staff. The more pronounced this tendency is, the lower the score will be. If the index is higher than 100, it means members of the workforce diversity group are concentrated at higher salary bands than other staff.

2. The distribution index is not calculated when the number of employees in the workforce diversity group is fewer than 20, or when the number of other employees is fewer than 20.

## 5.3 Work, health and safety

Tables 32 to 34 show the department's work, health and safety performance and injuries from 1 January to 30 June 2024, as the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

The following entities and clients are excluded from the performance and injury data for the department: Biodiversity Conservation Trust, Cape Byron Reserve Trust, Central Coast Water Corporation (dormant), Cobar Water Board, Coffs Coast Regional Park Trust Board, Corporation Sole – minister administering the Heritage Act, Dams Safety NSW, Dumaresq-Barwon Border Rivers Commission, Energy Corporation of NSW, Environmental Trust, Environment Protection Authority and Staff Agency, Environment Protection Authority Chair, Essential Energy, Heritage Council of NSW, Hunter River Salinity Trading Scheme Operations Committee, Hunter Water, Hunter Water Ministerial Corporation (dormant), Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust, Lord Howe Island Board, National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Trust, Boards of Management under Part 4A of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, National Trust Australia (NSW), Natural Resources Access Chief Regulator, Natural Resources Access Regulator, Sydney Water Corporation, Taronga Conservation Society Australia (Zoological Parks Board), Threatened Species Scientific Committee, Water Administration Ministerial Corporation, Water Investment Trust, Water NSW.

There were no prosecutions under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*.

**Table 32** Distribution of injuries reported from 1 January to 30 June 2024

Injury outcome	Injury numbers	Percentage of total injuries
No treatment/first aid treatment (no impairment)	196	55.21%
Medical treatment only	94	26.48%
Lost time injury	65	18.31%
<b>Total</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 33** Types of injury from people claiming iCare insurance from 1 January to 30 June 2024

Type of injury	Number of claims	Percentage of claims
Body stressing	32	31.37%
Falls, trips and slips	25	24.51%
Being hit by moving objects	11	10.78%
Hitting objects with a part of the body	10	9.80%
Mental stress	6	5.88%
Other incident	6	5.88%
Chemicals and other substances	5	4.90%
Vehicle incidents and other	4	3.92%
Sound and pressure	2	1.96%
Biological factors	1	0.98%
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** percentages in table above add up to 100.08% due to rounding

**Table 34** Lost time rates reported from 1 January to 30 June 2024

Lost time claim measures	Number
Lost time claim count	23
Lost time frequency rate–lost time claims per 1 million hours worked	5.65
Average lost time rate–lost time claims per 100 employees	0.85
Lost time severity rate–lost time days divided by lost time claims	21.11
Lost time severity rate–lost time days per 1 million hours worked	119.29