



AGENCY INFORMATION GUIDE

2023



Acknowledgement of Country

Hunter Water operates across the traditional country of the Awabakal, Birpai, Darkinjung, Wonaruah and Worimi peoples. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing relationship with the land, and acknowledge and pay respect to Elders past, present and future.

Mariin Kaling - All for Water

Saretta Fielding

Saretta

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
ABOUT HUNTER WATER.....	4
How we operate	4
Organisational structure and responsibilities	5
Organisational Structure Chart.....	7
HUNTER WATER'S DECISION-MAKING FUNCTIONS THAT AFFECT THE PUBLIC.....	8
Land and Property Development	8
Billing	8
Water Meters.....	8
Trade Waste.....	8
Standpipes	8
Pipe maintenance and repair.....	8
Recycled water.....	8
Illegal connections.....	9
Backflow prevention	9
TYPES OF INFORMATION HELD BY HUNTER WATER.....	9
HOW TO ACCESS HUNTER WATER'S INFORMATION	9
Open Access Information	9
Proactive disclosure	9
Informal Access.....	10
Formal Access.....	10
HOW HUNTER WATER ENGAGES WITH THE PUBLIC	10
Customer and Community Advocacy Group (CCAG)	10
Lower Hunter Water Security Plan Community Liaison Group (LHWSP CLG).....	11
Throsby Creek Government Agencies Committee.....	11
Customer Experience Monitoring Program	11
Your Voice – Have Your Say	11
Community Funding Program.....	11
FEEDBACK AND QUESTIONS	11
General enquiries	11
Right to Information Officers	12
Information and Privacy Commission	12

INTRODUCTION

This Information Guide has been produced by Hunter Water in accordance with Section 20 of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* ("GIPA Act").

The purpose of the document is to provide members of the community, Hunter Water staff, and the public with information concerning:

- The structure and functions of Hunter Water;
- The way in which the functions of Hunter Water affect members of the public;
- The avenues available to the public to participate in policy development and the exercise of Hunter Water's functions;
- The type of information available from Hunter Water and how this information is made available.

This Information Guide is available on Hunter Water's website (www.hunterwater.com.au).

ABOUT HUNTER WATER

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

Hunter Water was the first SOC to be proclaimed within New South Wales pursuant to the *State Owned Corporations Act 1989*. Our Board comprises nine members including the Managing Director, Chairperson and seven independent Directors appointed by Hunter Water's Shareholding Ministers. The Board of Directors oversee the organisation's policies, management and performance. The Board of Directors set strategic direction for the organisation and ensure Hunter Water achieves its business and regulatory commitments. We operate under the *Hunter Water Act 1991* (NSW).

How we operate

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

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

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

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

Detailed information and statistics regarding our infrastructure, assets, income, expenditure and human resources are published in the Annual Report, available on the Hunter Water website. If you do not have internet access, please contact us (using the details at the end of this document) and we will forward a copy of this report to you.

Organisational structure and responsibilities

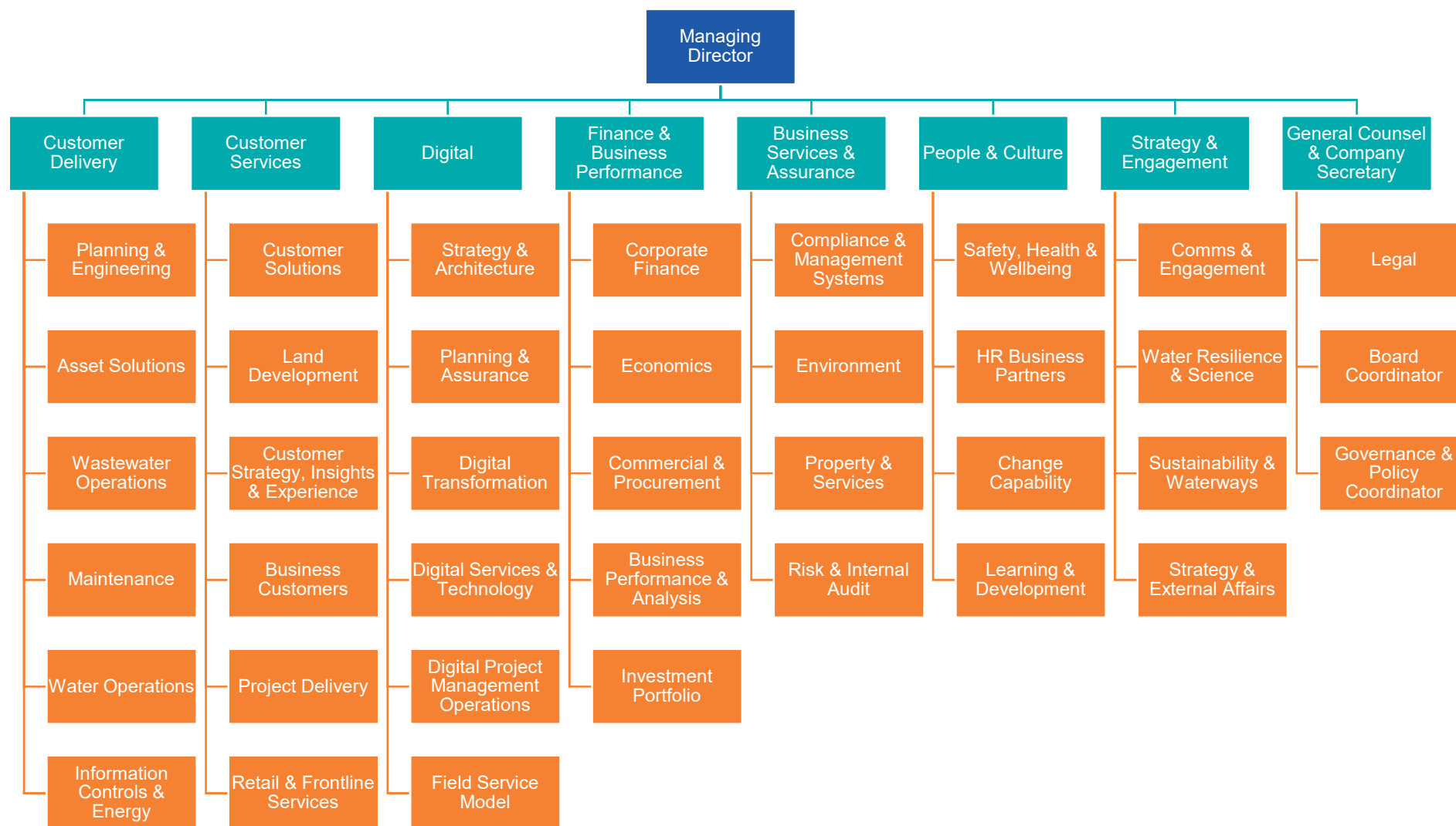
The Managing Director is a member of the Hunter Water Board of Directors and is the voice and face of the corporation. The position is accountable for operational safety while providing leadership to staff and the executive, delivering the strategic vision and direction, overseeing all operating activities, capital programs and projects and ensuring compliance with regulatory frameworks. The Managing Director is also responsible for managing Hunter Water's relationships with its stakeholders. These include: state and federal governments, members of parliament, community and special interest groups, industry bodies, unions and suppliers, as well as our regulators, who are the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

The Hunter Water Executive Team consists of seven managers who all report to the Managing Director. They oversee policy implementations, the day-to-day management of our people, and the delivery of services to our customers across the different divisions.

Division	Executive	Responsibilities
Customer Delivery	Executive Manager Customer Delivery	<p>The engineering division within Hunter Water that provides water and wastewater services to its customers within the Hunter.</p> <p>The planning and delivery of Hunter Water's capital program for infrastructure assets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meter reading, billing and account management for all Customers; • Customer contact and investigation and response to Customer complaints; • The land development process and interaction with Developers;
Customer Services	Executive Manager Customer Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The management of the customer response aspects of water and sewer incidents for all major and critical customers; • Credit management and debt recovery for all debtors; • The development and implementation of strategies for the management of backflow prevention and trade waste.
Digital	Executive Manager Digital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide accurate, meaningful, proactive and timely ICT support to business operations • To ensure the effective management of Hunter Water's digital resources.
Finance & Business Performance	Executive Manager Finance & Business Performance	<p>The overall financial management of the business. This includes business strategy, procurement, corporate accounting, budgeting and forecasting, treasury management, payroll, taxation, fixed assets, stakeholder reporting, financial analysis and economic regulation.</p>

Division	Executive	Responsibilities
Business Services & Assurance	Executive Manager Business Services & Assurance	Provide quality support services and assurance to Hunter Water, including property management, insurance, internal audit, environmental, fleet, records management, resilience, risk and facilities management functions.
People & Culture	Executive Manager People & Culture	Includes human resources, safety, health and wellbeing, and organisational change management capability.
Strategy & Engagement	Executive Manager Strategy & Engagement	The delivery of a sustainable infrastructure program to ensure a resilient and sustainable water future for our region.

Organisational Structure Chart



HUNTER WATER'S DECISION-MAKING FUNCTIONS THAT AFFECT THE PUBLIC

Land and Property Development

Hunter Water is responsible for the installation of all new water and sewer services and for ensuring that we protect the ongoing supply of quality water and sewer services for our community. If you are subdividing land or developing property, we need to approve the installation of all new water and sewer services. If you're building 1.5 metres or less from one of our water or sewer mains or sewer junction, then we need to approve your plans and you need to follow our requirements.

Billing

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

Water Meters

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

Trade Waste

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

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

Standpipes

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

Pipe maintenance and repair

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

Recycled water

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

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

Illegal connections

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

Backflow prevention

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

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

TYPES OF INFORMATION HELD BY HUNTER WATER

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

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

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

HOW TO ACCESS HUNTER WATER'S INFORMATION

Open Access Information

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

- Media releases
- Publications – including this Agency Information Guide and our Policy Guide
- Contracts Register – list of contracts between Hunter Water and the private sector
- Disclosure Log - information which may be of interest to the general public which has already been released under GIPA
- Documents Tabled in Parliament

Proactive disclosure

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

- Operating Licence
- Customer Contract
- Annual Report
- Regulatory Reports, including monthly drinking water quality reports
- IPART and Pricing Proposals
- Customer Information
- Media Releases
- Love Water Grants
- Community Events
- Major Projects in your area
- Drought support for Farmers
- Community Groups
- History & Heritage Assets
- Customer Newsletters
- Standard Technical Specifications

Hunter Water also has a 'Newsroom' section on its website, which is regularly updated so members of the public can easily keep up to date with everything regarding water in the Hunter region (under About/Our business or search for "News and Updates").

Informal Access

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

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

Formal Access

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

HOW HUNTER WATER ENGAGES WITH THE PUBLIC

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

Customer and Community Advocacy Group (CCAG)

This community group provides a channel for advice and feedback between Hunter Water and local councils, customer representatives, environmental groups and community organisations. In recent years the group has provided advice and feedback to Hunter Water on topics including:

- pricing reviews
- treatment plant upgrades
- flooding in the lower Hunter
- land developments within our drinking water catchments

- improving the health of Throsby Creek

Lower Hunter Water Security Plan Community Liaison Group (LHWSP CLG)

This community group has been formed to help share information between Hunter Water and community representatives from across the Lower Hunter on the development of the revised Lower Hunter Water Security Plan.

The LHWSP CLG enables two-way communication and engagement between Hunter Water and representatives of the Lower Hunter community as we:

- test and understand community values around water and preferences for potential supply and demand option types
- explore the feasibility, cost, benefits and impacts of different option types
- develop portfolios of options and assess these against future states
- engage with our community about these portfolios
- revise the Lower Hunter Water Security Plan to secure the region's sustainable water future.

Throsby Creek Government Agencies Committee

This Committee, chaired by the Member for Newcastle, seeks to deliver cooperative leadership from numerous government agencies with responsibility for the status of the Lower Throsby Creek. The Committee is seeking to further improve the environment of the Throsby Creek water way and its surrounds, and the amenity of the area for residents, visitors and commercial users.

Customer Experience Monitoring Program

Hunter Water conducts regular surveys to monitor customer experience. Customers who are invited to participate, and complete a survey, are automatically eligible to participate in a 'lucky door' prize draw to win a \$50 gift card. Prizes are drawn each month.

Your Voice – Have Your Say

This is Hunter Water's dedicated engagement platform, which enables our community to be involved in projects and programs at a time that suits them through surveys, polls, forum discussions and interactive mapping tools. You can register online via Hunter Water's website.

Community Funding Program

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

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

FEEDBACK AND QUESTIONS

General enquiries

Hunter Water welcomes general enquiries from members of the public. You may enquire by mail, email, or telephone. We can deal with most enquiries informally to avoid the cost of making a formal GIPA application.

Postal address: PO Box 5171 HRMC NSW 2310

Telephone: 1300 657 657

Email: enquiries@hunterwater.com.au

Right to Information Officers

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

Office: 36 Honeysuckle Drive, Newcastle West

Postal address: PO Box 5171 HRMC NSW 2310

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

Email: gipa@hunterwater.com.au

Information and Privacy Commission

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

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

You are also welcome to contact them directly:

Free call telephone: 1800 472 679

Email: ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au

Postal address: GPO Box 7011 Sydney NSW 2001

Office location: Level 17, 201 Elizabeth Street Sydney 2000