

Sydney  
**WATER**

**Annual Report**  
2020-2021  
**Summary**





## The Sydney Water Annual Report 2020–21 details the challenges we've faced, the actions we've taken and the milestones we've achieved to deliver a better life through innovation, diversity and achieving together.

Today more than ever, Sydney Water has its eyes trained on the future, with the shape of water services poised to evolve in line with our growing city, a changing climate and the shifting environmental needs of our communities.

We are proud custodians of a 130-year legacy of providing safe, high-quality water to people in and around Sydney for drinking, bathing, recreation and sustenance. However, the days are long gone when covering basic requirements defines us as an organisation and meets the expectations of our growing community.

Increasingly, our role is to envision a thriving, liveable and sustainable future and provide the infrastructure, services and education required to deliver it.

We deliver drinking water to more than five million people every day. In 10 years, that number will rise to six million or more. To better serve our growing city, we are working with our valued partners to explore best practice water supply options that rely less on rainfall and more on innovation and the principles of a circular economy.

As we draw upon the creative power of innovation, the synergies of diversity in our organisation and our communities, and our achievements with our valued partners, we look forward to many more years of serving Greater Sydney, the Blue Mountains and the Illawarra region and our vital relationship with water.

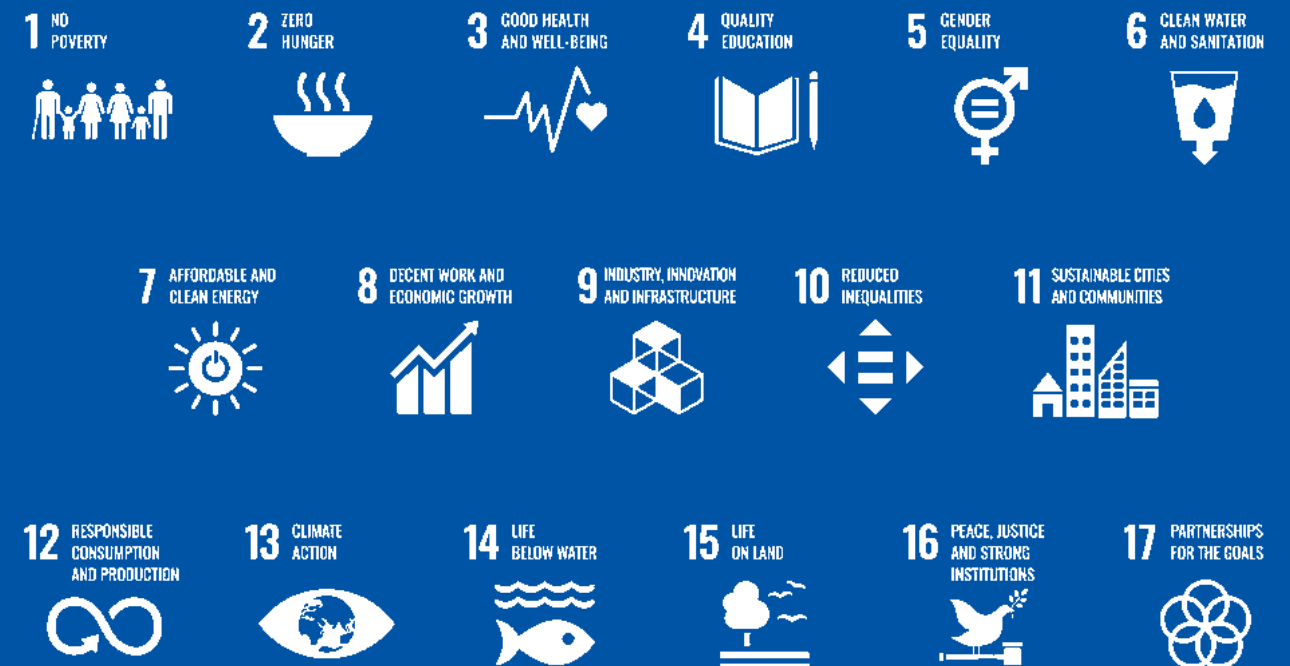


## Contributing to global sustainability

We are now into the second year of our 2020–2030 Sydney Water Strategy. Launched in 2020–21, our new vision and strategy is based on customer insights, extensive analytics, and macro and micro trends.

Our customers have told us that the future they envisage is one in which their communities are thriving, liveable and sustainable. As an essential services provider, we play a critical role in creating that future.

What that in mind, Sydney Water has committed to the **United Nations Global Compact** to fight poverty, inequality and climate change through the adoption of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Each of the 17 SDGs is represented by an icon. Throughout our annual report, we use these icons to indicate how our projects and activities contribute to this important promise, which involves sustainably managing our resources and improving our communities for this generation and those that follow.



# HIGHLIGHTS OF 2020-21

## Building on our strengths, committed to doing more

Amid the challenges of the past year, Sydney Water continued to demonstrate leadership in the water industry, delivering innovative solutions, new technologies and award-winning products and services. We are proud of our achievements and will continue to provide thought leadership and drive the principles of a circular economy and sustainable development within our sector.



### SIGNIFICANT HIGHLIGHTS OF 2020-21 INCLUDE:



**Global Water Awards 2021 Wastewater Management Project of the Year:** Refresh Woolloomooloo environmental improvement program



**NSW Australian Water Awards 2021 Research and Development Excellence Award:** Sydney Water's role in COVID-19 detection in wastewater [Development of Wastewater Epidemiology for NSW: New laboratory for SARS-CoV-2 detection in wastewater under the Water Research Australia (WRA) ColoSSoS (Collaboration on Sewage Surveillance of SARS-CoV-2) Project]



**Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue 2020 Project of the Year:** Sustainability category – St Marys Water Recycling Plant upgrade



**Shortlisted for the 2021 Australian Financial Review Most Innovative Companies Award:** Sydney Water's COVID-19 detection in wastewater



**Australian Water Awards 2020, Research Innovation Award:** Innovative sensor suites and intelligent robotics for condition assessment of concrete sewers in collaboration with the University of Technology Sydney



**2021 NSW Water Infrastructure Project Innovation Award:** Geospatial Planning Tool which Sydney Water developed with its valued partners



**Top Graduate Employers 2021:** Sydney Water named the nation's No. 1 graduate program, according to a survey of 2,900 graduates



**The Institute of Analytics Professionals of Australia:** Sydney Water's Andrew Woods named a top 10 Analytics Leader nationwide



**Our gender pay gap has fallen below one per cent,** from 2.25 per cent a year earlier and 1.73 per cent the year before that. We continue to work towards a zero gender pay gap



The **Parramatta River Reference Group (PRRG)** was re-established in December 2020 to provide strategic direction and advocacy for the Parramatta River Catchment Group's Masterplan to help make the Parramatta River swimmable. The PRRG includes the NSW Member for Parramatta and senior representatives from the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, the NSW Environment Protection Authority, NSW Health, Transport for NSW, Aboriginal Affairs and the Greater Sydney Commission



**The launch of our report, *Urban Typologies and Stormwater Management*,** helped achieve a cool, green, liveable Western Sydney Parkland, which received a Commendation from the Planning Institute of Australia (NSW) in the Australian Urban Design Awards 2020



**Our customer sentiment scores,** as measured by Customer Satisfaction, Trust and Reputation, led the industry, beating other service providers as well as water utilities in Melbourne



**Greater Sydney Commission 2021, Greater Sydney Planning Awards:** The Johnstons Creek Naturalisation project in collaboration with our engineering partner, won this award for its focus on place and its engagement with local community and councils



# Advancing reconciliation



The launch of our *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan* (RAP) is an important step in our reconciliation journey. The RAP, endorsed by Reconciliation Australia, is a two-year plan that provides a roadmap of the actions we will take to advance reconciliation.

To illustrate the role of water in linking First Nations people to surrounding lands and each other, Sydney Water has commissioned an artwork that expresses that connection. This artwork graces the cover of our RAP.

As Australia's largest water utility, we understand our unique role in learning from and continuing the work of First Nations people to protect water resources and improve the health of the landscape across our operating areas.

The evolution of our RAP involved workshops with First Nations employees and our Board of Directors, Executive team, Reconciliation Committee members and partners.

"The support and commitment of all employees across Sydney Water has been incredible.

This RAP will not only impact on the lives of First Nations people through increased employment and economic opportunities, it will also provide an opportunity for all employees to build their cultural capability," said Veronica Murphy, a Reconciliation Committee member and Sydney Water's First Nations Inclusion Specialist.

"Delivering on our RAP commitments will help to strengthen our relationships with First Nations people, organisations and communities within our operating area."

At its core, the RAP sets out our ambition to develop strong relationships with First Nations communities to bring about meaningful change. We are taking action in areas where we can make a difference, such as creating and improving economic and social outcomes for First Nations people.

Adding another dynamic to this commitment, Sydney Water commissioned a work from artist, curator and graphic designer Dennis Golding to illustrate our RAP and to display in our Parramatta headquarters building.

## Here are some activities we have undertaken to support reconciliation:

- employing a First Nations Inclusion Specialist who works with our Reconciliation Committee to support our reconciliation plans and commitments
- the appointment of an Aboriginal Co-Chair to our Reconciliation Committee. Natalie Wilcock is the senior manager of Aboriginal Education and Engagement with TAFE Digital and joined the Committee in November 2020 to provide advice and guidance on our reconciliation actions
- becoming a corporate member of Supply Nation which promotes business between corporate Australia, government agencies and First Nations-owned businesses. Through our membership we aim to increase the number and annual spend with First Nations-owned businesses in our supply chain
- marking Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week with activities including panel discussions, videos and Aboriginal art workshops, to raise awareness and engagement with First Nations cultures and histories.



The support and commitment of all employees across Sydney Water has been incredible. This RAP will not only impact on the lives of First Nations people through increased employment and economic opportunities, it will also provide an opportunity for all employees to build their cultural capability.

**Veronica Murphy**  
First Nations Inclusion Specialist





# Award-winning testing for coronavirus in wastewater

Sydney Water's Laboratory Services technical specialists investigated the possibility of using molecular markers to identify SARS-CoV-2 in wastewater when COVID-19 first emerged in early 2020. An internal research monitoring program was initiated to support the collection and storage of samples from Sydney Water's wastewater treatment plants to be used in epidemiological, or disease-control, studies and method development at a later stage.

Since then, Sydney Water has been heavily involved in the development of a new laboratory method for SARS-CoV-2 detection in wastewater under the Water Research Australia (WRA) ColoSSoS (Collaboration on Sewage Surveillance of SARS-CoV-2) Project.

Sydney Water, in collaboration with ColoSSoS members, has developed an analysis method for detecting SARS-CoV-2 fragments in raw sewage samples. The method is novel with respect to SARS-CoV-2 but builds on our extensive experience with sewage surveillance for other viruses, such as norovirus, adenovirus and poliovirus.

International experience shows that these methods can provide a sensitive means of detecting the presence of SARS-CoV-2 being shed into the sewer to help identify COVID-19 virus infections before clinical cases being reported, or in the absence of clinical cases – an early-warning system for public health officials.

The work also complements clinical testing in a manner that is highly cost-effective. Just a single sewage test can potentially detect the presence of a single virus shedder in a population of many thousands, including pre-symptomatic and asymptomatic shedders that can be missed from other forms of testing.

We continue our research in method efficiencies and quality improvements and continue to investigate sequencing techniques to identify the various strains of the virus.

Sydney Water has built a strong, collaborative relationship with NSW Health as we continue to analyse raw sewage samples collected from the Sydney catchment and regional NSW.

Combined with clinical testing, sewage testing provides a useful additional tool to inform NSW Health of the absence of, and/or identifying the re-emergence and prevalence of, the COVID-19 virus.

Importantly, the testing supports COVID-19 pandemic control strategies in NSW. The work has since scaled up and is now supported by a team of more than 20 scientists from the Customer Delivery Laboratory Services field and laboratory teams.

This project to develop wastewater epidemiology for NSW won the NSW Australian Water Association Awards 2021 R&D Excellence Award. Sydney Water was shortlisted in the 2021 Australian Financial Review Most Innovative Companies awards for our COVID-19 response.

## About this report

Sydney Water's full Annual Report for 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 covers our:

- statutory information
- financial statements
- other regulatory information.

Visit [sydneywater.com.au/annualreport](https://sydneywater.com.au/annualreport) to read the *Annual Report 2020–21* and previous reports.

If you have any comments or questions about this report, please email [annualreport@sydneywater.com.au](mailto:annualreport@sydneywater.com.au) or write to:

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## Contact us

### By telephone

**Customer enquiries:**  
13 20 92 (Monday–Friday, 8.00 am – 5:30 pm)

**Help with leaks and faults:**  
13 20 90 (24 hours every day)

**Corruption hotline:**  
Freecall 1800 500 965 (24 hours every day)

**Interpreter service:** 13 14 50

**Hearing and speech difficulties:** We offer a free teletypewriter (TTY) service for customers with hearing and speech difficulties. Call the National Relay Service on 13 36 77 and enter the phone number 13 20 90 (24 hours every day).

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## On the web



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**For more information please see the full Annual Report on our website [sydneywater.com.au](https://sydneywater.com.au)**