

# Water utilities of the future—Australia's experience in starting the transition

A publication  
of the Cooperative  
Research Centre  
for Water Sensitive  
Cities ThinkTank

*Urban areas facing 21st century water management challenges need 21st century water utilities. But what is a 'utility of the future'? How does it meet the urban water challenges ahead? And what can a utility do TODAY to make the transition?*

## Becoming a utility of the future is challenging

There is no 'standard' water utility, so there is no 'standard' transition pathway. Each utility will deal with its own challenges and forge its own way as it becomes a utility of the future.

But, Australian case studies show utilities that are starting to make this transition do three things:

1.

THEY  
CHANGE  
THEIR INTERNAL  
OPERATIONS AND  
CULTURE

2.

THEY  
PARTNER  
WITH EXTERNAL  
ORGANISATIONS IN  
NEW WAYS

3.

AND  
THEY  
INFLUENCE THEIR  
AUTHORISING  
ENVIRONMENT

## The water utility of the future manages water for life and liveability

The water utility of the future is moving beyond delivering traditional 'taps and toilets' services. Instead, it manages water for life and liveability.

Visions for the water utility of the future include some common features, such as:

- managing urban water sustainably, and enhancing liveability
- partnering in local economic development
- fostering evolving urban spaces that are appropriately serviced
- collaborating with other organisations to plan and deliver services
- using advances in intelligent networks and operations to improve productivity
- seeking the least cost, highest community return solutions at catchment scale
- focusing on customer value
- being agile organisations with robust commercial capability.

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Within their existing authorising environments, water utilities can find progressive internal and external initiatives to:

- increase the efficiency and innovation in core services
- undertake research and demonstration to acquire the necessary proof-of-concept to support alternative approaches to water services (even if outside the current servicing remit)
- develop new business models for non-traditional activities, and
- form partnerships with stakeholder organisations in delivering integrated services.

## But there is much that water utilities can do TODAY

This thought piece from the CRC for Water Sensitive Cities ThinkTank uses case studies to demonstrate the initiatives that water utilities can undertake today, wherever they are. The examples are Australian, but the lessons can be applied globally.

The many case studies demonstrate that these actions will generate lasting change. However, they also require a commitment to new perspectives, new partnerships and courage to embrace new approaches. For those who have commenced the transition, there is still more to do, to make these actions and behaviours the new ‘business as usual’.

- First, utilities must keep transforming themselves internally—embedding a culture of change, integrating existing services, identifying new services and products, and building community engagement capacity.
- Second, they must keep engaging with external bodies—other water utilities, other service utilities, private sector providers and community groups, to identify and deliver services and generate community value.
- And third, they must keep influencing their authorising environment—demonstrating how new services and delivery methods can benefit both providers and the community, and developing and maintaining community support.



Use the QR code to download the report.

Or go to:

<https://goo.gl/bs7KkT>

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