CRC for
Water Sensitive Cities

IRP2 Stakeholder Engagement Evaluation

Mid project review

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IRP2 Stakeholder Engagement Evaluation: Mid Project Review
Comprehensive economic evaluation framework (IRP2)
IRP2-14-2019

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Introduction

The CRC for Water Sensitive Cities (CRC WSC) aim is to create knowledge and solutions that help communities become more water sensitive. The CRC WSC is currently delivering Tranche 2 projects by working with key stakeholders across Australia to adapt and apply new, innovative concepts and tools to a whole-of-city or metropolitan scale.

The aim of Integrated Research Project 2 (IRP2) is to develop, test and apply a broadly applicable framework for conducting integrated economic assessment to support business case development for investing in water sensitive, liveable and resilient cities. The project builds on knowledge and outputs generated in Tranche 1.

The key deliverables for the project are:
- a non market Value tool (work package 2);
- a Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA) tool (work package 3);
- finance models and policies (work package 4);
- case studies (work package 5); and
- an economic valuation of urban climate improvement through Urban Heat Island (UHI) Mitigation (work package 6).

IRP2 has a strong focus on working with key stakeholders, especially end users such as local government and water utilities, to ensure that they will want to use the tools, frameworks, information and lessons generated from the Project.

A mid-project evaluation of IRP2 was undertaken to:

- assess whether the activities, outputs and communications as laid out in IRP2's stakeholder engagement strategy were being delivered;
- ensure that the work packages remain relevant to the current policy context
- determine whether there are any policy changes that the team should be aware of;
- determine the effectiveness of the various options for keeping informed about the project and for providing input; and
- assess current opinions on the potential benefit of IRP2 outputs.

The following sections provide a summary of the methodology used, key results and a discussion of selected feedback provided from the survey and interviews, and concluding remarks.

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Methodology

An initial review was undertaken to cross check the proposed engagement activities outlined in the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy against the range of activities that had taken place over the period July 2017 to April 2018. This analysis found that the majority of engagement activities were occurring as proposed. Furthermore, it recommended that future assessment of the engagement strategy should involve consideration of the effectiveness of the engagement activities that have been undertaken. This was undertaken via a two-step analysis of key stakeholder views, using a combination of an online survey and phone interviews.

Survey

An online survey was developed to inform and guide IRP2 on the ongoing stakeholder engagement and adoption activities. The survey questions were informed by the CRC WSC Evaluation and Learning Framework and designed specifically to assess the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the project.

A full list of the questions in the online survey is provided in Attachment A.

The survey link was sent to CRCWSC Regional Managers, who distributed the survey to key contacts within CRCWSC Participant organisations as well as executives of the CRCWSC. It was also sent to the IRP2 Project Steering Committee. The survey was open for a period of approximately 3 weeks and generated eight responses.

Interviews

To increase the response rate to the survey, phone interviews were conducted with selected stakeholders identified in consultation with the IRP2 project team. The interviews used the same questions contained in the survey but provided an opportunity for more detailed discussion about the evaluation exercise. Eight stakeholders were interviewed.

Results

Appropriateness

The aim of the IRP2 team is to ensure that the project work packages remain relevant to the current policy context. The purpose of the "appropriateness" question was to determine whether there are any current policy changes that the team should be aware of.

The majority (47%) of responses to this question indicated that the broad policy context was the same as it was when the project was first developed, with about one third indicating that only minor policy changes had occurred (Figure 1). Additional feedback in response to this question indicated that both policy and planning changes had occurred and that they were supportive of the direction of IRP2 and would assist with adoption. Examples provided of policy and planning changes that will support WSUD initiatives included:

- reform of Clause 56 of the Victorian planning provisions;
- development of Integrated Water Management Forum strategies in Victoria;
- the Perth and Peel@3.5million Planning Framework and the Better Urban Water Management process in Western Australia;
- planning reforms and processes in NSW, such as in relation to the local government Local Environment Plan reviews, which create opportunities for embedding WSUD; and
- non-market tools are starting to be embedded in the business case that State Government is using for WSUD development.

There was a general view that while there is greater understanding now about the policy needs compared with the start of the project more understanding from stakeholders about their needs is still required.
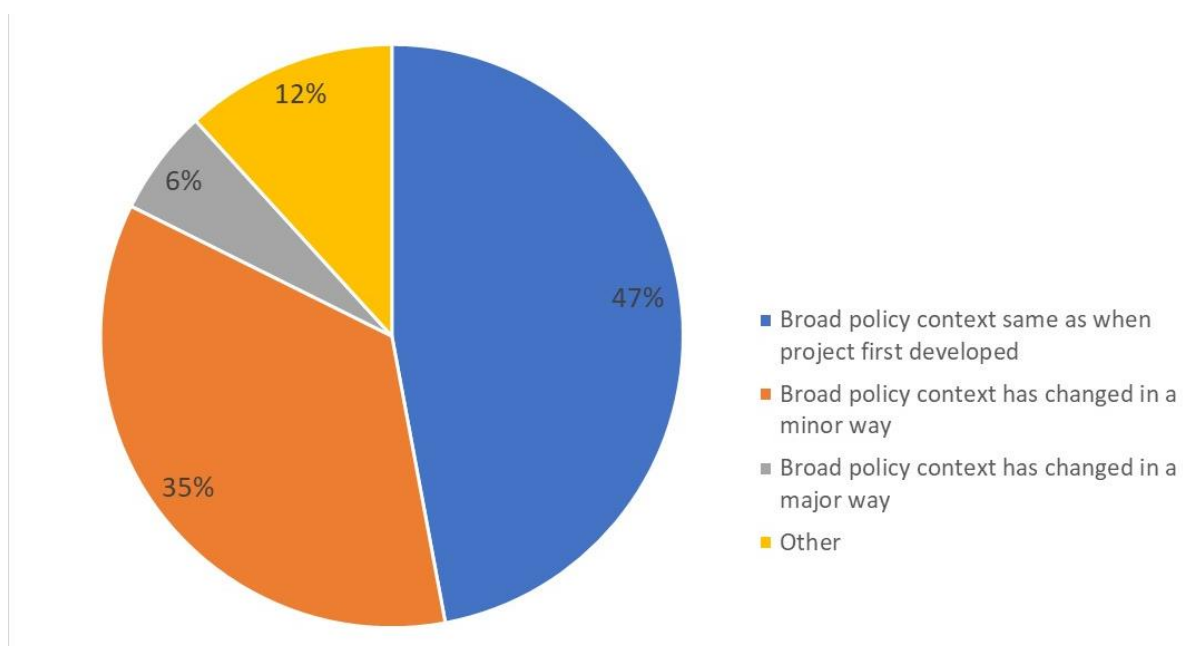

Figure 1. Extent of change in the broad policy context at a regional or state scale relevant to IRP2.

Effectiveness

Five questions were asked in relation to the effectiveness of engagement, differentiating between how stakeholders received information and how they provided input.

A summary of the different communications channels used by stakeholders to keep informed about project progress is provided in Figure 2.
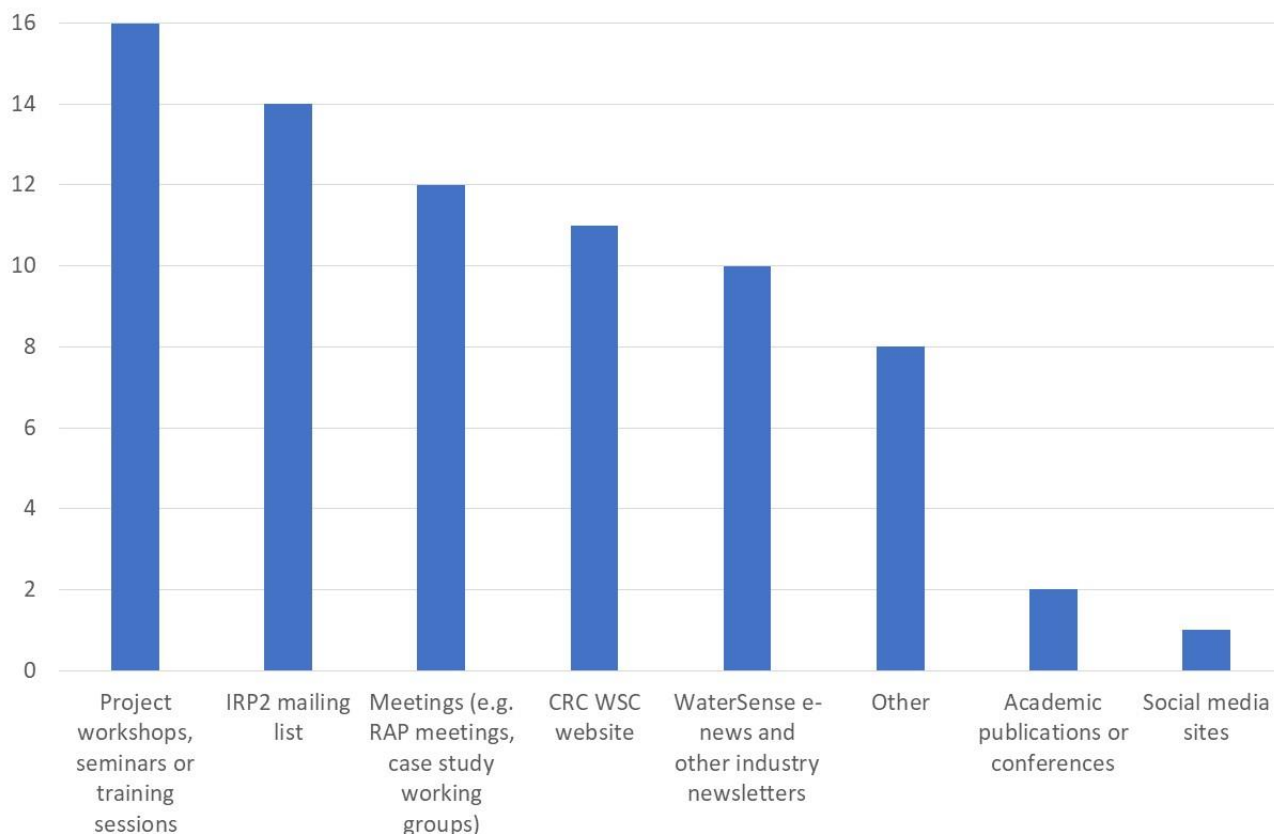
Figure 2. Communications channels used by stakeholders to keep informed about progress with IRP2.

The CRC WSC website and WaterSense e-news were noted by most respondents as providing access to information about project progress, but there was a view that the effectiveness of these channels was "neutral" or "effective" at best, with very little support for social media (Table 1).

In contrast, the following four activities were considered "effective" or "very effective" as a source of information:

- project workshops, seminars or training sessions;
- IRP2 mailing list;
- meetings (RAP meetings, Case Study working groups, Project Steering Committee); and
- direct contact.

Information source	Very ineffective	Ineffective	Neutral	Effective	Very effective
CRC WSC website			6	5	
WaterSense e-news and other industry newsletters			6	7	
Project workshops, seminars or training sessions				7	6
IRP2 mailing list			2	6	3
Meetings (e.g. RAP meetings, Case Study working groups)				9	5
Social media sites (e.g. LinkedIn)			1		
Academic publications or conferences				3	
Direct contact				1	4

Table 1. Ratings of the effectiveness of different information sources based on stakeholder completion of the online survey and interviews.

With respect to providing input, the results were similar to the above, with the following most commonly cited by respondents (Figure 3):

- project workshops, seminars and training sessions;
- membership on regional advisory panels, the project steering committee or as a case study partner representative;
- advanced access to the beta versions of the tools for trialling and testing; and
- direct contact with IRP2 team members in response to release of outputs.

A number of key stakeholders who were interviewed indicated that the most effective way for them to provide input was through direct discussions with the project team (Table 2). Responses from some stakeholders were strongly of the view that the IRP2 team was the most effective at communications and seeking feedback from stakeholders.

The overall assessment of the effectiveness of engagement was clearly in favour of the current approach, with three quarters of respondents saying that the current engagement was "effective" and the remainder saying that it is "very effective". The focus of a number of comments was how the roll out of the tool testing could have been improved given that this is central to adoption, such as consistency in how it was delivered and greater clarify on the purpose of the testing.
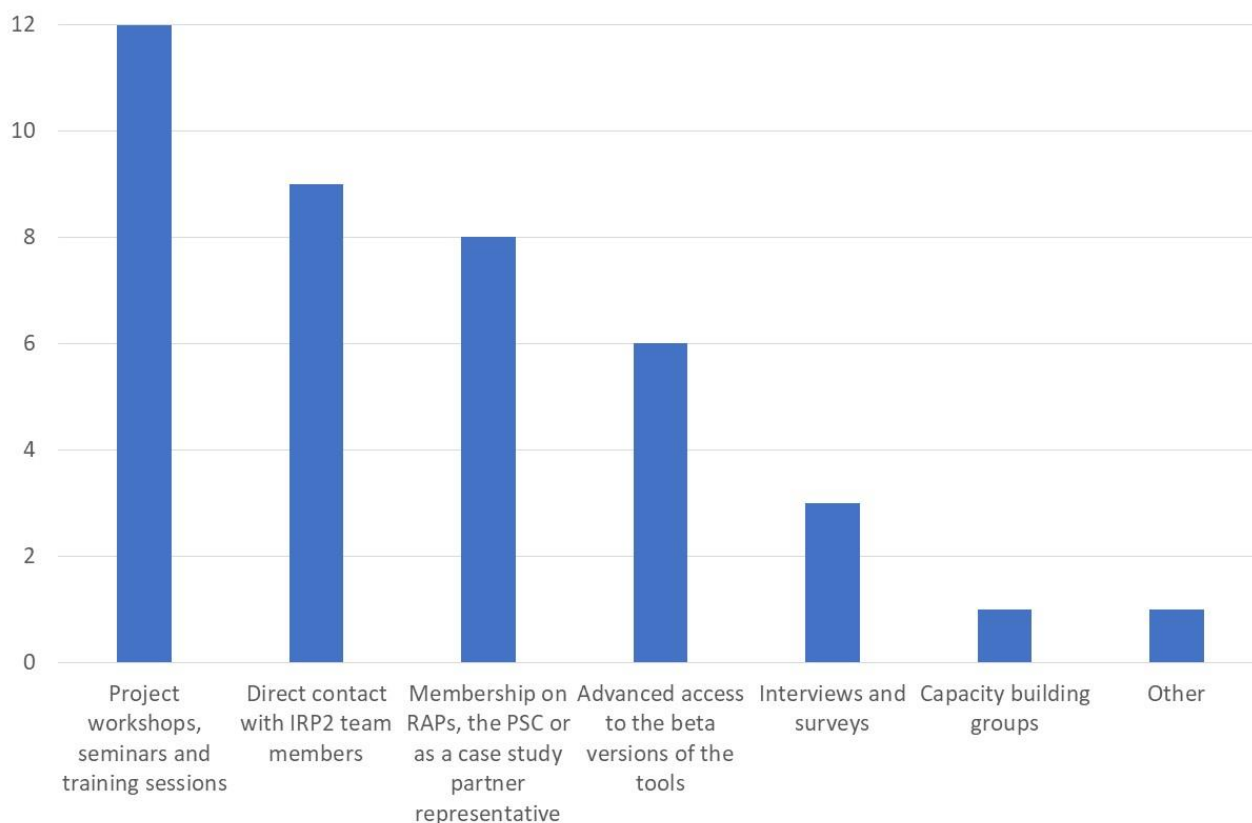
Figure 3. The number of stakeholders surveyed and interviewed that used the different engagement activities to provide input to the development of the project.

Information source	Very ineffective	Ineffective	Neutral	Effective	Very effective
Project workshops, seminars and training sessions				8	2
Interviews and surveys				4	1
Membership on RAPs, the project steering committee or as a case study partner representative				7	1
Advanced access to the beta versions of the tools for trialling and testing				3	2
Capacity building groups				2	
Direct contact with IRP2 team members in response to release of outputs				6	4

Table 2. Ratings of the effectiveness of different engagement activities as a way to provide input to the development of the IRP2.

Comments provided in response to questions about effectiveness included that:

- the training workshops were very useful, however, this also raised questions about how user support will be provided in the future. There was a view that this needs to be determined now and communicated to end users, along with how the tools will be maintained and updated as new information becomes available.

- there needs to be workshops more broadly than just with CRC participants. This is considered important to support broader adoption and mainstreaming of the tools;

- there needs to be more engagement with "non-believers" such as property developers and treasuries. This could form part of an extended testing stage. It is noted that although this forms part of WP4.1 and WP5, these work packages may need to be accelerated or enhanced. Furthermore, although Treasuries and Regulators were recognised as a category of stakeholders (ES3), property developers were not included in the original stakeholder engagement strategy and therefore may require special consideration;

- more workshops are required to assist with testing of the tool on examples relevant to participants. This wold also provide researchers with an opportunity to engage more directly with end users;

- while there is strong trust in the tool, the method is highly academic so the findings need to be more robust and self evident from a brief read. This could be conveyed in a brochure or similar;

- conferences and similar forums should be used as a way to showcase the tool for senior executives; and

- the videos have been useful for training but they do not work on all computers.

Impact

The purpose of the final question was for stakeholders to provide feedback on whether they believe the IRP2 deliverables will have an impact for their organisation, and if so, how. Two thirds of respondents indicated that they believe that the deliverables can assist with decision making, however, they needed to wait until the deliverables are finalised to better understand where they will be of most benefit (Figure 4). The remaining responses indicated the deliverables were relevant strategically or operationally, with no one indicating that the deliverables would be of no value.

The strong response to the need to finalise the deliverables first before determining how they can assist in decision making was linked by respondents to the requirement for the adoption phase of the project to be undertaken. This further highlights the importance of the engagement activities in the remainder of the project.

Specific comments provided by respondents included:

- while there is strong interest in the tool, there is a need to more proactively convince treasuries and regulators of the benefits of the tool;

- the use of the tool should help speed up development assessment, not slow it down. This will assist with engaging the property development sector;

- the outputs of the IRP2 project need to be used to influence policy not just individual projects;

- need to determine how best to encourage each state to embrace consideration of non-market values into decision making, for example, at a local government scale;

- there needs to be some focus on business development to find more opportunities to apply and test the tool. This is likely to be beyond the IRP2 team's current resources;

- there is an assumption that there is a latent market demand for the tool, but this needs to be tested;

- more work is required to determine who is the right target audience for the roll out of the tool. This could be different (or in addition to) the organisations that have been involved to date;

- make the deliverables either easily usable by everyone, or train specific people in an organisation to be subject matter experts;

- that opportunities where deliverables can contribute to strategic planning and operational activities have been identified but more work is still required to increase internal capacity to understand the benefits of WSUD and how to use non-market values information; and

- provide an opportunity for a researcher or post graduate student to be embedded in organisations to help them work through applications of the tools.

■ (a) ■ (b) ■ (c)
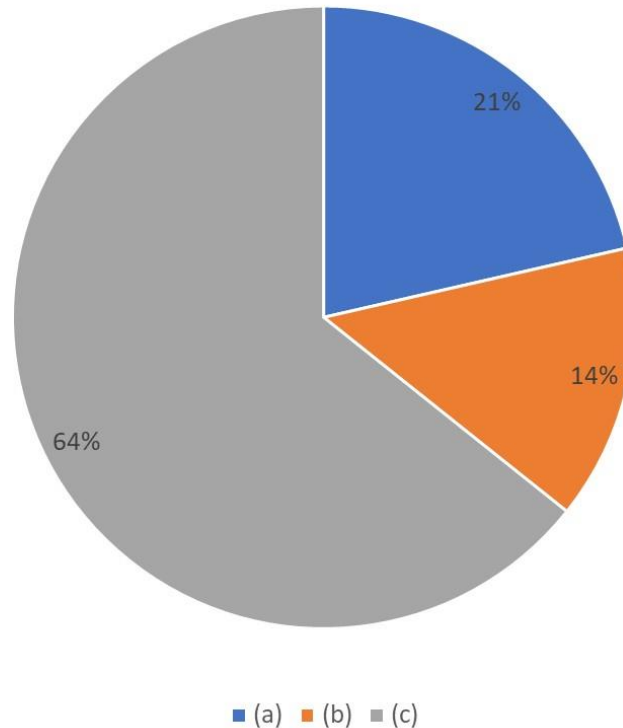
Figure 4. Summary of feedback on the projected impact of IRP2. Letters in the above chart relate to the following statements: (a) We have identified opportunities where IRP2 deliverables can contribute to strategic planning for my organisation, (b) We have identified opportunities where IRP2 deliverables can contribute to operational activities in my organisation, and (c) We believe that IRP2 deliverables can assist with decision making, however, we need to wait until the deliverables are finalised to better understand where they will be of most benefit.

Conclusion

Overall, the results of the evaluation were positive and supportive of the direction the project is taking: Of note were that:

- the policy context has not changed or only in a limited way across the various states, and where change has occurred it is in support of the project;

- opportunities for keeping informed about the project of for providing input are effective or very effective, with direct engagement with the project team either via meetings, workshops or phone calls being the most valued form of engagement;

- there is a view that the project will be of benefit to stakeholders but that the deliverables need to be finalised first before determining how they can best assist in decision making; and greater clarity is now required on how the adoption phase will proceed, noting that it is essential if the IRP2 tools are to have an impact and meet the CRC's objectives for this project.

Attachment A – Survey questions

The following questions were used as the basis of the online survey and as questions for interviews with key stakeholders.

Appropriateness

IRP2 wants to ensure that the work packages remain relevant to the current policy context and to determine whether there are any current policy changes that the team should be aware of.

Question 1.

Which of the following statements is most applicable to the regional and state policy context in your jurisdiction?

(a) The broad policy context is the same as it was when the project was first developed

(b) The broad policy context has changed in a minor way, but this will have no influence on the relevance of the deliverables

(c) The broad policy context has changed in a major way and this needs to be addressed in the project deliverables.

Question 2.

If you answered (c) for Question 1, what major policy changes have occurred in your jurisdiction that are relevant to adoption of IRP2 project outputs as you understand them?

Effectiveness

The IRP2 project is using a range of approaches to communicate project progress and seek input into the design of deliverables.

Question 3.

Which of the following have you used to keep updated on project progress? (Select multiple if relevant)

(a) CRC WSC website

(b) WaterSense e-news article

(c) Project workshops

(d) I am not sure where to find information on IRP2

(e) Other (please describe)

Question 4.

For those approaches identified in Question 2 that you have used, how would you rate their effectiveness in communicating IRP2 outcomes?

(a) CRC WSC website

(b) Very effective, effective, neutral, ineffective, very ineffective

(c) WaterSense e-news article

(d) Very effective, effective, neutral, ineffective, very ineffective

(e) Project workshops

Where relevant, please provide further information in support of your response(s).

Question 5.

Which of the following activities have you used to provide input to the project?

(a) Project workshops

(b) Interviews

(c) Other (please describe)

Question 6.

For those approaches identified in Question 4 that you have participated in, how would you rate their effectiveness in enabling you to provide input? (rated on a scale of: Very effective, effective, neutral, ineffective, very ineffective)

(a) Project workshops

(b) Interviews

(c) Other (please describe)

Question 7.

Which of the following statements best reflects your views on the project to date:

(a) The current approaches to engagement are highly effective

(b) The current approaches to engagement are effective

(c) I have no view on how effective the current approaches to engagement are for this project

(d) The current approaches to engagement are ineffective

(e) The current approaches to engagement are highly ineffective

Impact

IRP2 has been designed to have a significant impact for our key stakeholders by developing, testing and applying a broadly applicable framework for conducting integrated economic assessment to support business case development for investing in water sensitive, liveable and resilient cities

Question 8.

Which of the following statements do you believe is most applicable to your organisation:

(a) We have identified where IRP2 deliverables can contribute to strategic planning for my organisation;

(b) We have identified where IRP2 deliverables can contribute to operational activities in my organisation;

(c) We believe that IRP2 deliverables can assist with decision making, however, we need to wait until the deliverables are finalised to better understand where they will be of most benefit;

(d) It is not clear how the IRP2 deliverables will inform the work of our organisation;

(e) We do not believe that the IRP2 deliverables will assist with decision making

Where relevant, please provide further information to support your response.

Attachment B – Stakeholder interviews

The following key stakeholders were interviewed for the evaluation:

- Ben Furmage, CRC Water Sensitive Cities (14 December 2018);
- Burditt Krost, Strategic Planning Institute (17 January 2019);
- Emma Yuen, CRC for Water Sensitive Cities (14 December 2018);
- Grace Tjandraatmadja, Melbourne Water (18 January 2019);
- Greg Ryan, Landcorp (13 December 2018);
- Ian Kininmonth, Water Corporation WA (17 January 2019);
- Kristy Good, Sydney Water (21 January 2019); and
- Mellissa Bradley, Water Sensitive SA (15 January 2019).