

Wastewater Discharge Licence — Communications Strategy

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Prepared by: Tahlia Kemp	Prepared for: Administering Agency - DEPawS
Title: Water Quality Officers	Title: NA
Business unit: Water Services	Business unit: Authorisations
Email: Tahlia.kemp@powerwater.com.au	Email: waste@nt.gov.au

Background

Wastewater treatment plants that discharge to surface or ground water require authorisation to do so under the Water Act 1992 (NT). This authorisation takes the form of a Waste Discharge Licence (WDL) issued by the Controller of Water Resources. The development, maintenance and implementation of a WDL communication strategy is:

- typically a conditioned requirement of these WDLs; and
- consistent with key result areas (KRAs), goals and strategies identified under Power and Water Corporation's [Statement of Corporate Intent](#).

Power and Water's 2021-22 Statement of Corporate Intent represents Power and Water's commitment to the Northern Territory Government over a four year period commencing 1 July 2021 and identifies two long-term strategic pillars of relevance to the Licensed Activity:

- **Always Safe** – Continuous improvement of Power and Water's safe design approach to asset management to prevent injury and improve useability of products, systems and facilities.
- **Customer** – Power and Water's focus is on improving customer experiences, cultivating relationships and being a trusted partner with its customers, community and stakeholders.

Power and Water has a formal commitment to report to the Northern Territory Government on performance against the key result areas, strategic goals and associated performance indicators set out in the Statement of Corporate Intent.

Power and Water has developed a communication strategy that provides a framework of how it will engage with stakeholders/members of the community that may have a genuine interest in or be affected by these licensed activities i.e. the discharge of treated wastewater under these WDLs. Where appropriate site specific Communications Action plans are prepared for individual wastewater treatment facilities.

The drivers for stakeholder engagement under this communication strategy include the need to provide appropriate information regarding:

- the location of existing licensed activities (i.e. where wastewater is discharged); and
- new activities or plans that may influence the licensed activity.

Goals/Objectives

The goals of the communication strategy are to increase awareness of and engagement around:

- how wastewater is treated and disposed of within the communities that Power and Water services;
- environmental and public health risks associated with these activities and how they are managed and monitored by Power and Water in collaboration with relevant authorities; and
- infrastructure planning and decision-making processes.



Key strategic messages

- Everyone is responsible for producing wastewater;
- Wastewater treatment protects both public and environmental health;
- Preventing blockages and overflows;
- Effluent discharge is mostly a necessary consequence of wastewater treatment unless viable reuse options can be identified; and
- Power and Water is a responsible utility that is committed to managing risk (health and safety and environment), monitoring and research (environment), meeting our service standards for operational performance (compliance with WDLs) into the future as reflected in our strategic goals.
- Power and Water's vision is to be a best practice, commercially focussed and customer centric multi-utility respected by the community for our contribution to the NT economy and its pursuit of the long-term interests of consumers.

PWC Actions under the communication strategy

Power and Water has a range of customer service related strategies identified in the Statement of Corporate Intent, which form part of its commitment to the Northern Territory Government. In addition, Power and Water has identified the following specific actions to be progressed under this communication strategy.

1. Current Power and Water WDLs will be publically available to view at all times, predominantly through Power and Water's website.
2. Power and Water will develop and maintain a register of key stakeholders for each WDL (i.e. those identified as likely to have a genuine interest in the licensed activity).
3. Increase public awareness and knowledge of current and future wastewater treatment and associated environmental monitoring and management activities in their communities using:
 - a) factsheets (available from the Power and Water website, Customer Service Centres and where appropriate public information displays);
 - b) publications (available from Power and Water website including wastewater treatment plant design standards, trade waste guidelines and other related publications);
 - c) other education resources on request (e.g. liaison with local schools/educators); and
 - d) provision of support/data for external communication processes (e.g. Darwin Harbour Report Card, Power and Water Annual Report, National Greenhouse and Energy System reporting and participation in the Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee and the Darwin Harbour Integrated Monitoring and Research Program).
4. Increase public awareness of and engagement with the wastewater planning process (e.g. preparation and release of the Darwin Sewerage Strategy and associated community forums).
5. Installation and maintenance of public information and warning signs developed in collaboration with relevant authorities to communicate risk when required.
6. Development and implementation of relevant larger scale project specific communication strategies when required (e.g. planned maintenance, infrastructure upgrades etc.).

Power and Water will develop checklists/action plans for each WDL to determine communication actions that are required or feasible on a case by case basis within each licence period i.e. not all actions may be progressed at individual sites if it is neither feasible nor necessary to do so.

Power and Water's business units (e.g. Water Services or Remote Operations) will engage with Power and Water's Corporate Communications unit in the development and release of external public communication materials that may be required under this communication strategy (e.g. fact sheets, internet content, media releases, public notices, advertisements etc.) and ensure that it is targeted and appropriate considering corporate style, branding and mindful of any cultural sensitivities.

More information

Email: customerservice@powerwater.com.au

Phone: 1800 245 092

Web: powerwater.com.au

