



## Media Statement

2 February 2015

### Release of 2014 Water, Sewerage and Irrigation Performance Report

The [2014 Water, Sewerage and Irrigation Performance Report](#) released today by the Economic Regulation Authority (ERA) shows a State-wide shift away from traditional sources of drinking water due to the drying climate. A [Summary of Key Findings](#) has also been published.

The report compares the performance outcomes and performance trends of the water supply schemes licensed by the ERA. The ERA's Chairman, Dr Stephen King said: "surface water lost its standing as the second largest source of drinking water both in Perth and in regional towns for the first time in 2013, and this trend continued into 2014. Between 2012 and 2014, the proportion of Perth's drinking water sourced from surface water has fallen from 25.2% to 16.5%, while in regional towns the proportion has fallen from 21.9% to 6.8%. In Perth, desalinated water is the second source of drinking water, while in regional towns, bulk (purchased) water is now the second source."

In 2014, Perth's drinking water was sourced from:

- 47.9% (124.9GL) from groundwater;
- 38.1% (113.1GL) from desalination; the result of Water Corporation's Binningup desalination plant going into full production;
- 16.5% (49.0GL) from surface water, 2.6% (7.8GL) from recycling and 0.7% (2.1GL) from bulk water suppliers.

In 2014, drinking water in regional towns was sourced from:

- 58.6% (55.0GL) from groundwater;
- 29.6% (27.8GL) from bulk (purchased) water;
- 6.8% (6.4GL) from surface water;
- 5.0% (4.7GL) from recycling.

Between 2013 and 2014, the total number of properties connected to water mains in the State grew by 3.2%, to reach 997,000 properties. Since 2009, the State has seen construction of new water and sewage mains of just over 1,000 km each.

Since 2009, the average annual water consumption per property has fallen by 11.5% (from 346kL to 306kL) State-wide. Perth broke the long-term downward trend in 2014 with the average annual consumption per property increasing by 2.0% (from 249kL to 254kL) to a three-year high; while in regional towns, consumption fell by an average of 0.6% (from 310kL to 308kL) per property.

Of the State's sewage, approximately 80% is collected in Perth and 20% in regional towns. Treating and using sewage effluent (wastewater) for non-potable purposes saves water that has

been treated to a standard suitable for drinking. Dr King noted: “in 2014, regional towns on average recycled over half (54.5%) of their wastewater for agricultural, industrial, municipal and commercial uses. By comparison Perth recycled less than 8% of its wastewater in 2014; a slight reduction from the previous year.” The total volume of wastewater produced State-wide has remained around the same level since 2012.

The level of water main breaks, sewer overflows and sewer main blockages remained close to the six year average in 2014. Breaks, overflows and blockages do not necessarily indicate maintenance issues. The level of breaks and blockages vary year by year due to local conditions, such as third party damage, tree root intrusion, storms causing flooding, or customer actions, such as grease poured in the drain.

Since 2012, the number of customer complaints to both water and sewerage service providers has dropped to record low levels across the State. According to the three water utilities involved, Aqwest, Busselton Water and Water Corporation, this can partly be attributed to the changes the utilities have made in separating customer enquiries from complaints.

Dr King commented: “it is encouraging to note customers seem more satisfied with their service providers. The ERA will closely examine the utilities’ new complaints classification methods as part of the next operational audit of their licences to ensure compliance with the Australian standard. The Water Corporation’s audit is scheduled to be the first, due in 2015.”

The supply of irrigation water in Western Australia has been influenced by climate and demand, with 2014 being the first year since 2010 to have an increase in water supplied by Harvey Water (from 41.8GL to 56.3GL between 2013 and 2014). The fall in supply in previous years was the result of reduced water allocations and contraction in the local dairy industry. Ord Irrigation’s supply continued to decline due to the fall in customer demand.

The report covers water and sewerage service providers that supply towns with more than 1,000 connected properties, and the State’s two largest irrigators. The service providers captured are Aqwest Bunbury Water Board, Busselton Water, City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Water Corporation, Ord Irrigation and Harvey Water. The purpose of the report is to bring transparency and accountability to the performance of the utilities.

The [2014 Water, Sewerage and Irrigation Report](#) and a [Summary of Key Findings](#) are available on the ERA website [www.erawa.com.au](http://www.erawa.com.au).

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