



Using a consultant to prepare your Water Cycle Management Study

**A WaterNSW
Current Recommended Practice**

February 2023

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WaterNSW

WaterNSW is the State-owned corporation responsible for managing bulk water supply. WaterNSW also acts to protect Greater Sydney's drinking water catchment through protecting the quality of the water supply.

More information about WaterNSW is at www.waternsw.com.au

Document Control

Version	Published date	Document administrator
v1	May 2013	Planning and Assessments, Sydney Catchments Authority
v2	December 2017	Catchment Assessments, WaterNSW
v3	February 2023	Catchment Protection, WaterNSW

1 INTRODUCTION

WaterNSW is tasked with protecting the health of the Sydney drinking water catchment, to ensure reliable, quality, drinking water is available for the 5.5 million people of Sydney and the Illawarra, Blue Mountains, Southern Highlands, Goulburn and Shoalhaven regions.

The purpose of this document is to provide information to assist in the engagement of a suitable consultant to prepare a Water Cycle Management Study (WCMS) in the Sydney drinking water catchment.

Development in the Sydney drinking water catchment is regulated by *State Environmental Planning Policy (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021* (the SEPP). The SEPP sets out the planning and assessment requirements for all new developments in the Sydney drinking water catchment to have a neutral or beneficial effect on water quality. It also requires the concurrence of the Regulatory Authority (such as WaterNSW) before development consent can be granted.

To assess whether your proposed development has a neutral or beneficial effect on water quality, the council must be satisfied that the development:

- has no identifiable potential impact on water quality, or
- will contain any such impact on the site of the development and prevent it from reaching any watercourse, waterbody or drainage depression on the site, or
- will only transfer any such impact outside the site where it is treated and disposed of to standards approved by the consent authority.

The council must refer more complex development applications to WaterNSW for concurrence before it can approve the development. Before giving concurrence, WaterNSW may impose conditions to ensure a neutral or beneficial effect (NorBE) on water quality is achieved. If WaterNSW is not satisfied a neutral and beneficial effect on water quality can be achieved, it will not give concurrence and council cannot approve the development.

1.1 Water cycle management study and the development application process

For council and WaterNSW to decide whether a development will have a neutral or beneficial effect on water quality (NorBE), all development applications must include a water cycle management study (WCMS). The information, reports and modelling needed in a WCMS will vary for different types of development and their risk to water quality. More detailed studies will be needed for developments that have a higher risk. Minor developments, with a low risk to water quality, will only need basic information to be included, such as a stormwater report.

‘All development applications must include a water cycle management study’

Current recommended practices (CRPs) and performance standards

Developments should also incorporate the latest versions of WaterNSW’s current recommended practices (CRPs) and performance standards into the design. CRPs represent best industry practice to maintain, or where appropriate, enhance water quality and provide solutions to manage the water quality impacts for a range of developments and activities. The current suite of documents are provided on WaterNSW’s website at www.waternsw.com.au.

‘The latest CRP’s and performance standards must be used in project design’

In addition, WaterNSW has a number of publications specifically designed to help landholders and developers in the drinking water catchment to meet the requirements of the SEPP. The *‘Neutral or Beneficial Effect on Water Quality Assessment Guideline 2022’* explains how the neutral and beneficial effect test applies to developments. The guideline groups developments into five types according to how complex they are and their risk to water quality.

Developers and landholders should also refer to the WaterNSW publication *‘Development in Sydney’s Drinking Water Catchment – Water Quality Information Requirements 2023’*. This document outlines the different reports and modelling that must be included in a WCMS, according to the type and size of your development.

2 Using consultants to prepare a water management cycle study

For simple developments, including alterations and additions to an existing dwelling, the water cycle management study will be relatively simple and can be prepared by someone with no specialist knowledge. However, for more complex developments the study will need to include information about a range of potential development impacts on water quality, including stormwater management, erosion and sediment control during construction, and impacts from the disposal of wastewater in unsewered areas. In these cases, WaterNSW recommends that landholders and developers consider employing a specialist/ consultant to prepare the WCMS.

‘WaterNSW cannot recommend specific consultants or specialists to prepare a water cycle management study’

You need to choose a consultant or specialist with care, especially where your proposed development and water cycle management study is large and complex. A poor-quality study that does not satisfy WaterNSW’s requirements will usually need further work and may cost you more.

You can save time and money by choosing the best consultant for your needs. WaterNSW has prepared the following information to help you choose a suitable consultant to prepare the water cycle management study to accompany your development application.

2.1 How do I find a consultant?

The easiest place to start looking for an environmental consultant, environmental engineer, planning consultant or other specialist who may be suitable to prepare your WCMS is to look for ‘Environmental / Pollution Consultants’, ‘Engineers – Consulting’ or ‘Engineers – General’ in the Telstra Yellow Pages or online.

Ask your local Council

Your council may have a list of environmental consultants or specialists who work in your area.

Professional associations

Professional associations may be able to help you choose a suitable consultant by providing contact details for their members. However, there may be other professional organisations and associations whose members include consultants that can prepare a WCMS that meets WaterNSW requirements. The following list provides a good starting point.

- Australian Contaminated Land Consultants Association (ACLCA)
- Australian Society of Soil Science
- Australian Water Association (AWA)
- Consult Australia
- Engineers Australia
- Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ)
- International Association of Hydrogeologists Australian Chapter (IAH)
- International Erosion Control Association (IECA)
- Planning Institute of Australia (PIA)
- Stormwater Australia
- Wastewater Australia

Word of mouth

Ask people or businesses you know who have used a consultant in the past to prepare a WCMS that met WaterNSW requirements or whether they can recommend someone.

Call for an expression of interest

You can also find a consultant by calling for expressions of interest through an advertisement in a local/ regional newspaper.

2.2 What to look for in a consultant

Preparing a WCMS may need a variety of skills depending on the complexity of the site and the development. The WCMS may need to detail a wide range of potential development impacts on water quality, including stormwater management, erosion and sediment control during construction, and the disposal of wastewater in unsewered areas.

You should think about the following factors when you choose a consultant:

- Does the consultant have experience in preparing water cycle management studies for developments in the Sydney drinking water catchment that meet WaterNSW requirements (you could ask for examples of previous studies they have prepared and ask for references or contact details of previous clients)?
- What relevant professional qualifications does the consultant have and what professional associations do they belong to?
- Does the consultant know and understand the relevant NSW legislation, including the planning and development control processes for developments within the Sydney drinking water catchment, the SEPP, and the relevant local environmental plan?
- Does the consultant know and understand all relevant guidelines and publications from WaterNSW about developments in the drinking water catchment? These include the 'Neutral or Beneficial Effect on Water Quality Assessment Guideline' and 'Development in Sydney's Drinking Water Catchment – Water Quality Information Requirements'.
- Does the consultant know and understand WaterNSW's current recommended practices and standards for developments in the Sydney drinking water catchment?
- Does the consultant have appropriate insurance coverage?
- Does the consultant have a professional and ethical reputation?
- Can the consultant complete projects on budget and on schedule?



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