

Fact sheet

ACT Water Governance Review

Objective of the review

Holistic water management is essential for supporting a vibrant and resilient city. The ACT Government is committed to achieving its vision for water management over the next thirty years which sees *a community working together, managing water wisely to support a vibrant, sustainable and thriving region* (ACT Water Strategy 2014-44: Striking the Balance).

To rise to these challenges, the ACT Government has initiated a review to consider the best way to support an efficient, effective and coordinated approach to water management in the ACT and surrounding region.

The review will examine the activities of all agencies responsible for water resource management including regulation, demand management and supply, planning and policy, intergovernmental relations and program delivery. It will have a broad scope, and include surface and groundwater, drinking and non-drinking water, environmental flows and catchment management, water recycling and wastewater treatment, stormwater management and urban run-off/reuse.

Blueprint for reforms to be implemented by an Office of Water

The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) is leading this review and working closely with all ACT Government agencies responsible for water management and with our water utility, Icon Water. This participatory approach acknowledges water management is a shared responsibility. Key stakeholders and the broader community will be engaged as the project progresses.

The first stage of this project is exploring the current issues and revisiting our vision for the water sector. Issues identified relate to roles, responsibilities and accountabilities; capacity and capability (including funding, technical capacity, knowledge and information sharing); coordination; implementation arrangements, common vision and strategic alignment; information and data; monitoring, evaluation and reporting; and stakeholder engagement.

We will identify priorities for improvement in these areas and examine the role an Office of Water may provide in establishing a strong platform for future water management. Identifying areas of improvement is being guided by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Principles on Water Governance (Fig 1) and other criteria that have been developed throughout the course of the project.

Overview of OECD Principles on Water Governance

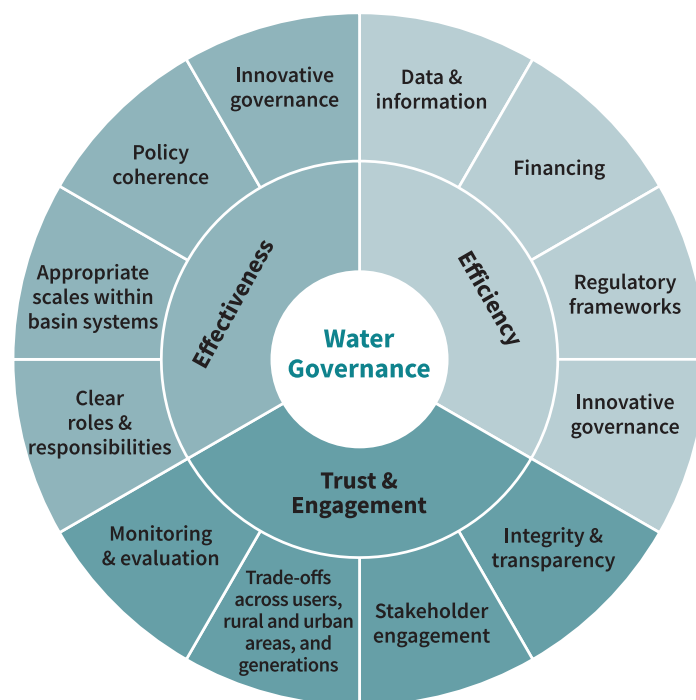


Fig 1: OECD Principles on Water Governance (2015)

A program of improvements will be developed. This program will include 'quick wins', as well as identifying any major reforms that would require more extensive investigation and public consultation. The program of improvements will be delivered through an Implementation Stage coordinated by an Office of Water.

A clear direction in water management will be fostered through the Office to deliver the following:

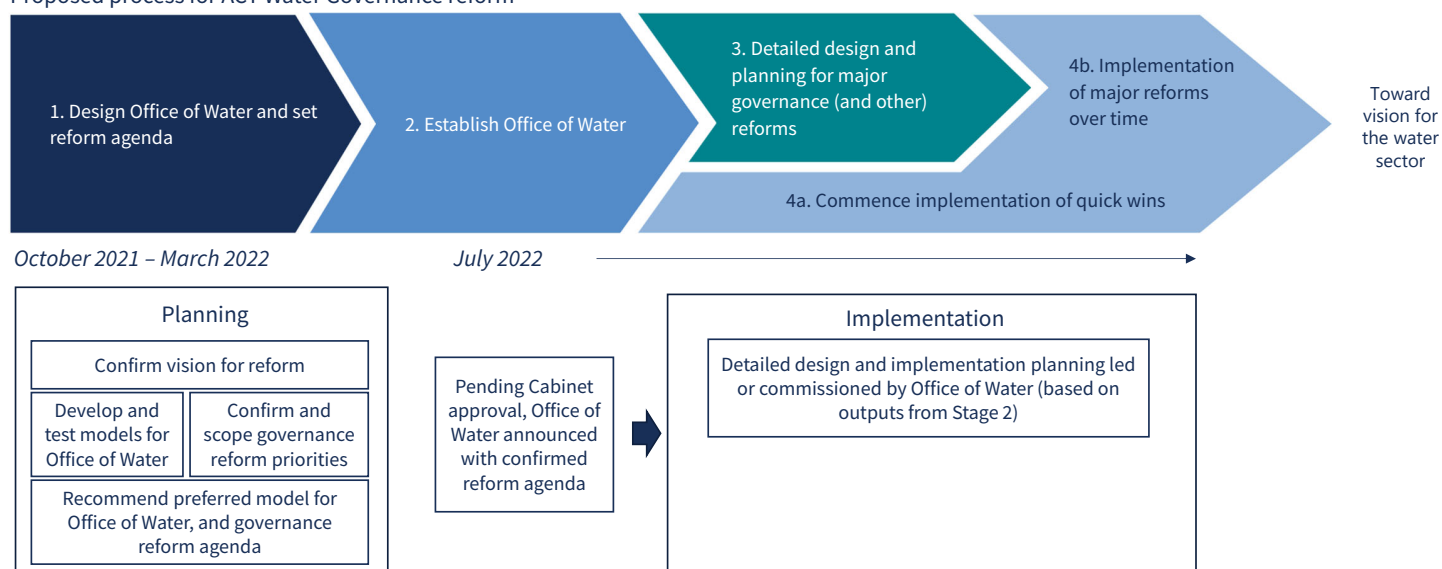
- A long-term integrated water management plan – securing a road map for long-term water supply for the ACT and region
- A refreshed ACT Water Strategy – promoting innovation, coordination and co-management of resources with the Ngannawal Traditional Custodians
- A Ngannawal Ngadjung Water Initiative
- A water information hub – enhancing technical capacity for evidence-based policy/planning and improved public access to all aspects of water information (including quality, flood, overland flow, water sensitive urban design - WSUD, groundwater, bores, monitoring sites, etc).

Project timeframe

The project to review administrative arrangements is well underway, but a participatory approach takes time. A report outlining a proposed program of improvement in the administrative arrangements for water management is expected to be provided to the ACT Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction in early 2022.

The ACT Government is committed to establishing water management arrangements that will support the future prosperity for the ACT and surrounding region. Informed by the outcomes of this review, the Government will be seeking to commence implementation of agreed improvements in 2022.

Proposed process for ACT Water Governance reform



Source: adapted from Aither 2021

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as Canberra's first inhabitants and Traditional Custodians. We recognise the special relationship and connection that Ngunnawal people have with this Country. Prior to the displacement of Ngunnawal people from their land, they were a thriving people whose life and culture was connected unequivocally to this land in a way that only they understand and know and is core to their physical and spiritual being. The segregation of the Ngunnawal people from Culture and Country has had long-lasting, profound, and ongoing health and well-being effects on their life, cultural practices, families, and continuation of their law/lore. We acknowledge the historic interruption of the Ngunnawal people of Canberra and their surrounding regions. We recognise the significant contribution the Ngunnawal people have played in caring for Country. For time immemorial they have maintained a tangible and intangible cultural, social, environmental, spiritual, and economic connection to these lands and waters.