

1. How does the technical alliance of engineers support training, recruitment and retention for your council?

The Central NSW Joint Organisation (CNSWJO) Water Utilities Alliance (The Technical Alliance) has used the resources of the CNSWJO to coordinate regional training for Water and Sewer Treatment Plant Operators. For example, six of Cowra Council's Treatment Plant Operators qualified with *Certificate III Water Industry Operations (Wastewater Treatment)* through a regional course coordinated by the CNSWJO.

The CNSWJO provided essential advocacy to support of the re-establishment of Water Industry Operations training in NSW; after the implementation of the Australian Qualifications Framework left NSW with no accredited training providers.

The Technical Alliance provides a network of professional experience that can assist all members with informal training and mentoring in water and sewer treatment operational issues.

The Technical Alliance doesn't really assist with recruitment at Cowra Council.

Participating in the Technical Alliance provides members professional support through the network; and can assist with staff retention at Cowra through offering the opportunity to gain additional knowledge and skills development.

2. How could government prevent forced amalgamations through legislative protections?

Cowra Council's objective is to maintain the water and sewer functions in the Cowra Local Government Area under Cowra Council control. As previously expressed; the grave concern is the centralisation of water and sewer services to the detriment of the Cowra LGA.

Having separate water and sewer funds may enable the water and sewer funds and assets to be forcibly amalgamated into a larger regional entity; separate to Cowra Council. Council is seeking a legislative solution that will not permit the formation of another entity without the concurrence of the Local Government parties.

3. Can you provide more information about the Council's groundwater supply pipeline and how this will support drought resilience?

The single source of the town water supply for Cowra is the Lachlan River downstream of Wyangala Dam. As stated in the 'Draft Lachlan Regional Water Strategy'; *'Without changes to how we manage the system or the rules by which we share water, the main water storages in the Lachlan; the Wyangala and Carcoar dams; could come close to empty more often. The frequency of flooding cycles may change and there could be less surface water, increased demand for groundwater and fewer opportunities for groundwater sources to replenish.'*

**Supplementary questions - Joint Select Committee on Protecting Local Water Utilities from
Privatisation: Cowra Council
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The severe drought of 2019/20 provided a clear indication that an alternate drought water supply source is required for Cowra's town water; with Wyangala Dam operations modelling indicating an imminent 'cease to flow' scenario in this period.

An alternate emergency groundwater supply for Cowra has been established at Billimari; a village in the Cowra LGA, 26km north of Cowra. Two bores have been constructed; licenced to supply up to 6ML/day to Cowra. This volume will be required to provide the critical daily demand at Level 3 'High Restrictions' as identified in Council's Drought Management Plan.

A reservoir, pumps and 23km of the rising main infrastructure to deliver the water to the Cowra Water Treatment Plant have been completed. The remaining 3km is currently under construction. This alternate emergency groundwater source addresses the issue of the main water storage Wyangala Dam being close to empty more often; and improves Cowra Council's drought resilience.