

Executive summary

The National performance report 2022–23: urban water utilities (2023 Urban NPR) compares the performance of 81 utilities and councils (utilities) and 5 bulk water authorities providing urban water services to over 25 million people across Australia. The 2023 Urban NPR is published by the Bureau of Meteorology (the Bureau) with information provided by utilities across Australia's states and territories. The report is the 18th in the series, and the 10th to be produced by the Bureau.

Part A of the report provides commentary on and analysis of key indicators. Part B of the report contains data for the full set of 166 indicators reported by utilities and bulk water authorities for all reporting years.

Decreased volume of water supplied from major sources of water after a wet and warm climate in 2022–23

Australia's total rainfall was above to very much above average for much of the country particularly in the northern and south-eastern mainland, making 2022–23 the seventh wettest financial year on record. The mean daily temperature was also above average across the country.

Nationally, total urban water sourced from major sources of water decreased by 7% in 2022–23 with New South Wales reporting the highest decrease of 15%. High rainfalls and surface water availability significantly decreased the use of desalinated water. New South Wales was the exception with decreased volumes of water sourced from surface resources due to low water quality and increased use of desalinated water.

Similar to the previous year, surface water was the dominant source in all states and territories except Western Australia which relied mostly on groundwater. Groundwater was an important source for water supply in Perth, where it increased by 5% compared to 2021–22.

Decreased reliance on desalination and shift to surface water supplies to meet water demands in most major urban areas

Increased surface water availability as a result of high rainfall in much of Australia decreased the use of desalinated water and shifted the urban water supply to surface water resources in 2022–23. All states that have desalination plants reported a significant decrease in production compared to 2021–22, except Sydney which almost tripled the volume of water sourced from desalinated marine water compared to the previous year. This was due to deteriorated surface water quality from significant flood events in the current year. Sydney also supplied the highest volume of water sourced from surface water compared with other urban areas in 2022–23.

Continued decrease in greenhouse gas emissions in most major urban areas

Nationally, the total net greenhouse gas emissions continued to decrease in 2022–23 compared to the previous year (9%) across all states and territories. All major cities achieved decreased greenhouse gas emissions in 2022–23, except Darwin which reported a 4.5% increase in its emissions. Perth continued to report the highest net greenhouse gas emissions, due to having the highest use of desalinated water. Perth also continued to represent the highest decrease percentage (33.2%) in emissions compared to the previous year.

Decreasing trend in typical residential bills for water and wastewater services

In 2022–23, the typical residential bill declined by 6% on the national scale compared to the previous year. The declining trend has been continuing since 2019–20. All major urban areas experienced a decrease in their typical residential bills for water and wastewater services during 2022–23. Of these, Canberra and Adelaide showed the highest percentage decrease (above 8%) in the price of their services compared to the previous year. Melbourne reported the lowest and Darwin reported the highest total typical residential bills of the major urban centres in 2022–23.

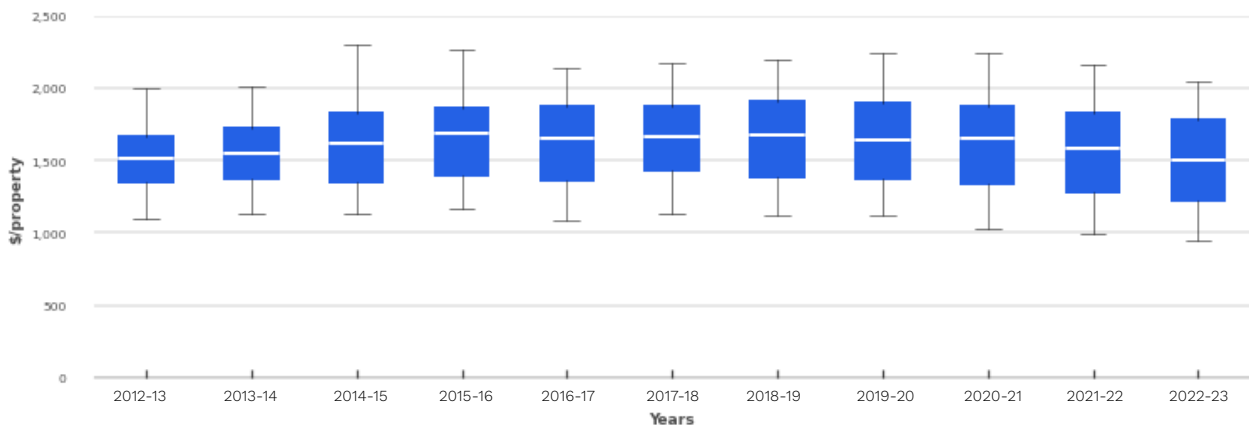


Figure 1 Typical residential bill: water supply and wastewater (\$), 2012–13 to 2022–23

For more information about bills, see Chapter 4 Pricing and Appendix A Tables A3 and A4.

Significant increase in total capital expenditure for water and wastewater services

In 2022–23, the total capital expenditure on water and wastewater services significantly increased as a result of capital program development for several utilities across different states. The increase in total capital expenditure for wastewater services was larger than that for water supply. Among major urban areas, Darwin reported the highest increase and Canberra reported the lowest increase compared to the previous year.

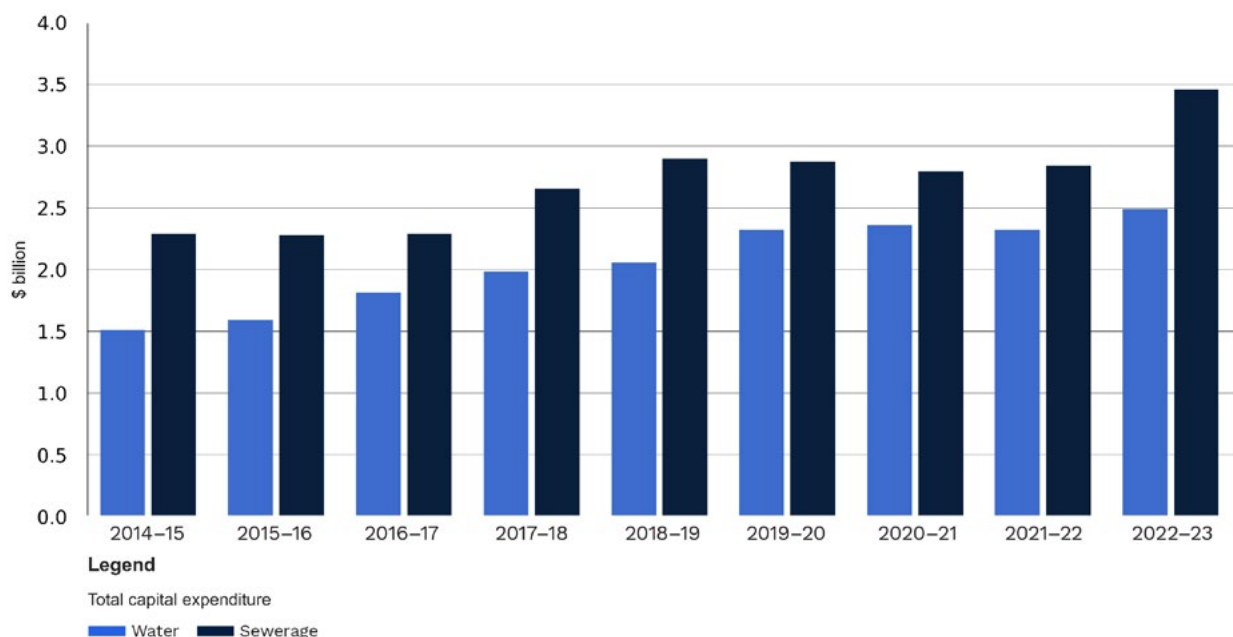


Figure 2 Total capital expenditure: water supply and sewerage (\$ billion) for utilities that reported all 9 years (excluding bulk water utilities)

For more details about capital expenditure see Chapter 5 Finance and Appendix A, Table A5.