Executive summary

The National performance report 2024–25: water and wastewater service providers (2025 NPR) compares the performance of 300 reporting entities delivering water and wastewater services to over 27 million people across Australia. Of these service providers, 226 supply both water and wastewater services, 24 supply only water services, 34 provide only wastewater services, and six operate as bulk water authorities. Of the total of 300 reporting entities, 211 were service providers included in the 2025 NPR for the first time in the 2024–25 reporting year following the expansion of the NPR Framework which was recommended in the 2020 NPR Framework Indicator Review. The first-time reporting service providers each serve less than 10,000 customers and were not required to report on their performance and service quality in the NPR in previous years. The Framework expansion aimed at improving national coverage of performance reporting and water data, while strengthening public confidence in water and wastewater service providers. According to the data reported in 2024–25, the Framework expansion provided the opportunity of evaluating service quality for 836,033 additional people across Australia compared to the previous year.

The 2025 NPR is published by the Bureau of Meteorology (the Bureau) with information provided by service providers across all states and territories. The report is the 20th in the series, and the 12th to be produced by the Bureau. Part A of the report provides commentary on and analysis of key indicators, and Part B of the report contains data for the full set of 143 indicators reported by service providers[2] across all reporting years.

Warm weather conditions and Water resourcing status in 2024–25

2024–25 was the warmest financial year on record since 1910–11, with above to very much above average temperatures across most of Australia. Much of southern and central Australia, along with parts of the east coast and north-west Western Australia, experienced record warm temperatures. National rainfall for 2024–25 was above the long-term average, driven largely by wetter-than-average conditions across northern Australia. In contrast, southern Australia recorded below-average rainfall, and parts of south-eastern South Australia and western Victoria experienced their driest financial year on record since 1900–01.

Australia's water service providers sourced approximately 3.96 million megalitres of water in 2024–25. Surface water remained the dominant national source, accounting for 76% of all water supplied, although Western Australia continued to rely more heavily on groundwater. Desalinated and recycled water contributed smaller but important shares, particularly in southern states experiencing hot and dry conditions. Western Australia sourced more than 70% of the national desalinated water as Perth's surface water storages remained below 40% of accessible capacity. Victoria and New South Wales together accounted for nearly 60% of all recycled water sourced nationally.

[2] First-time reporting service providers with less than 10,000 connected properties and bulk Authorities reported to a subset of indicators. More information on the definition of indicators and the reporting guidelines are available at the National Performance Report update page.

Enhanced national water resourcing insights with NPR Framework expansion

The inclusion of 211 first-time reporting service providers with less than 10,000 customers in 2024–25 improved visibility of water sourcing across regional and small communities. Collectively, these service providers sourced 217,062 megalitres of water in 2024–25, with groundwater representing nearly half of their supply (49.3%). These service providers accounted for around 5.5% of the national total water sourced in 2024–25, contributing 2.4% of national surface water, 28.2% of national groundwater, 0.4% of national desalinated water and 9.8% of national recycled water sourced.

Their sourcing patterns varied significantly by jurisdiction. In New South Wales and Queensland, first-time reporting service providers relied mainly on surface water, while those in the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia depended predominantly on groundwater. The Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Victoria did not have any first-time reporting service providers reporting to the 2025 NPR. Although the overall contribution of the first-time reporting service providers was modest, their inclusion in the NPR Framework strengthened national coverage and provided a more complete picture of Australia's water resourcing in 2024–25. This broader dataset also enhances Australia's capacity to report against the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 6: ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (SDG6.1.1 and SDG6.4.1).

Substantial increase in desalinated water sourced in major urban centres with hot and dry conditions across southern Australia

Major urban centres continued to rely predominantly on surface water in 2024–25, sourcing 1.69 million megalitres. Hot conditions combined with prolonged dry conditions and low streamflows across the south led to a substantial increase in desalinated water use compared to the previous year. Above-average rainfall and hot conditions, particularly in the north, led to only a slight increase in the overall surface water and groundwater use. Sydney and Melbourne remained the largest users of surface water, while Perth continued to be the largest groundwater and desalinated water supplier. Adelaide reported a sharp increase in desalinated water use in response to dry conditions, while Sydney's desalination output declined as high surface storage levels reduced the need for production. Melbourne sourced the largest volume of recycled water, driven by high residential and non–residential demands, while Canberra sourced the least. Due to significant changes in recycled water volume calculations after the 2020 NPR Framework Indicator Review, year-to-year comparisons for recycled water were not valid for this reporting period.

Stable residential drinking water and wastewater bills

In 2024–25, the median typical residential bill for drinking water and wastewater services for all reporting service providers across the country (excluding first-time reporting service providers for which historical data was not available) remained largely unchanged from the previous year. Most service providers reported only modest increases in bills, with nearly 70% recording changes of under 5% from 2023–24. Melbourne, Adelaide, Canberra and South East Queensland experienced an increase in their water and wastewater service bills in 2024–25, while Darwin, Perth and Sydney recorded decreases. The decline in Darwin and Perth was due to lower typical residential drinking water supply bills, despite increases in wastewater charges. Sydney experienced declines

in both drinking water and wastewater service bills, resulting in an overall decrease compared to 2023–24. Despite all year-to-year changes, total typical residential bills remained below 2020–21 levels in almost all major urban centres, with Melbourne reporting the highest and Sydney reporting the lowest declines over the past five years. Adelaide was the only exception, with the total typical residential bills marginally exceeding the 2020–21 level due to increases in both residential water use and prices.

Typical residential bills for drinking water and wastewater services among first-time reporting service providers were higher than other service providers. The inclusion of first-time reporting service providers widened the national bill range, with some reporting very high bills while others reported bills below $1,000. The national median across all service providers (including first-time reporting ones) increased by 7.6% and was the third highest since 2014–15 (Figure 1).

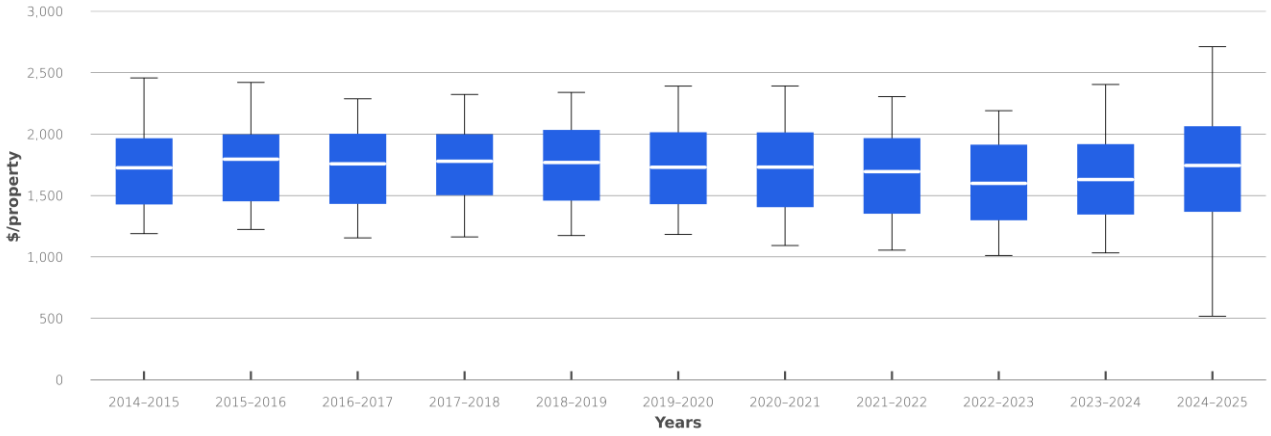

Figure 1 Typical residential bill: drinking water supply and wastewater ($) for all service providers, 2014–15 to 2024–25

Increased total capital expenditure for water and wastewater services

Total capital expenditure continued to increase in 2024–25, presenting an 19% rise across all reporting service providers excluding first-time reporting ones that reported for the first time. Capital expenditure has increased substantially over the last three consecutive years, from 2022–23 to 2024–25, as major programs progressed and project costs rose. The increase in expenditure for water supply was larger than that for wastewater services. All major urban centres reported increases in their capital expenditure for water and wastewater services, except Melbourne experiencing a decline due to reduced water-supply investment while still representing the second-highest total expenditure among all major urban centres in 2024–25. Sydney continued to report the highest capital expenditure for the fourth consecutive year, despite recording the lowest percentage increase from 2023–24. Despite all year-to-year changes, total capital expenditure remained above 2021–22 levels in all major urban centres, with Darwin showing the most significant growth and Canberra the smallest.

Capital expenditure among first-time reporting service providers remained comparatively much lower than other service providers.

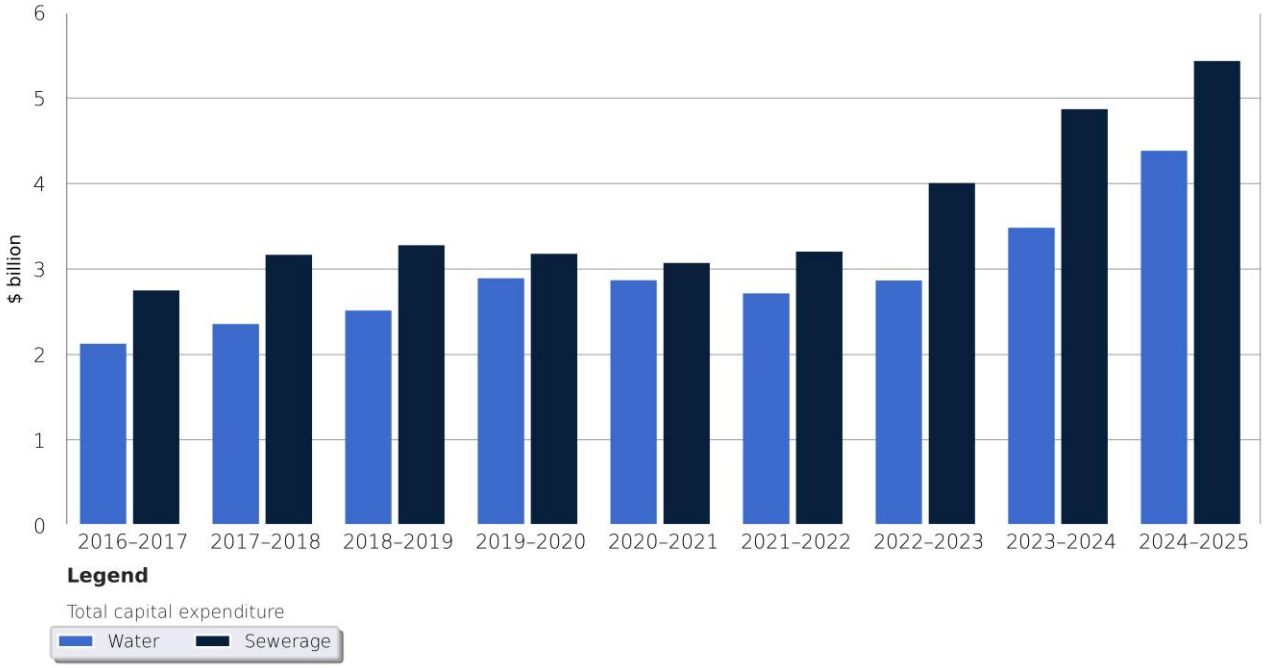

Figure 2 Total capital expenditure: water supply and wastewater ($ billion) for all service providers reported each year (excluding bulk water authorities)