

## Technical Reporting Transparency for the Water Industry Entities

Perception of increasing regulatory red-tape within the South Australian water industry has generated questions about the purpose of regulatory reporting, and potential cross over between agencies (DHA, DEWNR, EPA, ESCOSA, OTR) and the possibility of combined reporting. The five regulatory agencies have been in collaboration since March 2015 in an effort to produce a draft combined report that would meet each agency's requirements whilst reducing the regulatory reporting burden on the water industry.

Following the initial production of a draft combined technical report, the project backtracked to address the water industry's concerns regarding transparency around the current reporting practices, using the 90-day project framework. This involved consultation with industry and facilitated workshops with regulatory agencies to determine what the current reporting requirements were for each agency, and to clarify and further investigate concerns from industry. Results of the consultation showed that it was not clear to industry what information is required by each agency, and for what purpose. Explanatory notes (one per agency) were developed to clarify the technical reporting requirements whilst improving industry's understanding and cooperation.

Those notes can be found via the following links:

[OTR explanatory note](#)

[EPA explanatory note](#)

[DHA explanatory note](#)

[DEWNR explanatory note](#)

[ESCOSA explanatory note](#)

The 90-day project framework proved to be very useful for this specific project. It allowed for the project being completed in a shorter timeframe and also provided external support and networking that was highly beneficial to the project. Being a collaborative project between five different government agencies, it produced tools to help perform the collective piece of work and it also provided a high visibility of the project at CE and Ministerial level.

The 90-day project framework started with a design workshop including various stakeholders for the project and aimed at challenging what the project was trying to achieve. Thanks to this workshop undertaken in the early stage of the project, the project was very well defined from the outset. However, clarification of the scope of the project was required on a number of occasions to address the concerns and misunderstandings of other participants as the project seemed to move away from the original objective of creating a combined technical report that was useful to all agencies.

Although the project received initial endorsement by each department's director, the project was at times not consistent with departmental priorities, thus limiting the resources available. This approach resulted in poor delivery, restricted time commitment, a lack of ownership from departments, and successful completion falling solely to the Project Manager, which was not initially expected.

The sponsor of the project provided strong support throughout the entire duration of the project by allocating managers to assist the project manager when required.

This project was aimed at providing more transparency to the Water Industry and leading the path to further red-tape reduction. Because regulatory reporting requirements imposed by regulators are not always well articulated, there are concerns over transparency and undue regulatory burden. Consequently, working on increasing that transparency was a challenging but important topic, and focused agencies on clearly articulating the rationale for reporting requirements, rather than reporting for reporting's sake. Similarly, trying to move from regulation to education from a regulator's mindset perspective was not easy.

This project aimed at improving the climate of trust between the regulators and those entities being affected by the regulatory requirements. The outcome of this process is expected to be a healthy water industry in South Australia.

For more information contact the **Office of the Technical Regulator, Energy and Technical Regulation** in the **Department of the Premier and Cabinet** on **8226 5500**.