

Environment Protection Authority

# Strategic Plan 2021–24

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# Acknowledgement of Country

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The EPA acknowledges the traditional custodians as the first protectors of the land, water, sea and sky on which we live and work, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

We recognise the ongoing connection to their land, their waters and surrounding communities and acknowledge their ancient history here on this land.

We also acknowledge our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees who are an integral part of our diverse workforce and recognise the knowledge embedded forever in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander custodianship of Country and cultures.



# NSW EPA – the State’s primary environmental regulator

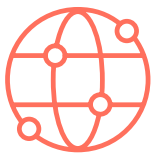
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Our Strategic Plan 2021–24 together with our Regulatory Strategy outlines our clear ambition to be a world class regulator. The plan describes how we will be the stewards of the environment and use all the regulatory tools to protect and enhance the environment we live in today and in the future.

The EPA has identified five areas of focus for the next three years (see page 4) where we will take action to be the courageous voice of the environment, finding evidence and science-based solutions to some of our most formidable environmental challenges.

We will take a proactive protective approach to ensure our land, air and water are future-proofed and enhanced for our children and generations to come.

In preparing this plan, four key considerations shaped our approach and priorities:



## Our world and environment are changing

The context in which the EPA operates and regulates is one that is forever changing, with:

- increasing global and domestic awareness of the **complexity of environmental issues**
- rapid developments in **technology and artificial intelligence**, which can disrupt the way regulation is performed
- high levels of **public engagement** with environmental issues and increasing expectations of safe, sustainable and healthy environments.

The EPA has set itself a clear ambition to be a modern, innovative world class regulator to address these challenges and take action to reduce and mitigate cumulative impacts on our environment.



## Listening and learning from different voices

We aim to ensure **Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives** are taken and incorporated within the EPA’s work and in important environmental issues, by building relationships with communities and working to maintain these relationships for the long term.

We **listen and learn** from our communities, by taking a place-based approach that considers the specific circumstances of a place and engaging with local communities to understand the complex, local factors and to share decision-making.



## An independent environmental regulator

The EPA is responsible for regulating using a suite of legislation and tools which establishes a strong basis for environmental regulation that is **outcomes focused, proactive** and contains appropriate compliance mechanisms and actions. As a statutory authority with an independent, expertise-based governing Board the EPA is able to operate effectively to achieve the environment and human health outcomes we are responsible for.

We are **bold, fair and firm** in our regulatory approach and **relentlessly accountable** for achieving positive outcomes for the environment and human health.

As a modern world class regulator, the EPA is focused on achieving real-world outcomes for the environment and the community of NSW. This means carefully balancing the priorities of the government, community and business in our regulatory approach and decision-making.



## Building on our strengths

Our core business remains focused on **protecting, restoring and enhancing** the quality of the environment in NSW, reducing risks to human health and preventing degradation of the environment. We will continue to **plan for, prepare and respond** to emergencies where human health and the environment are at risk.



# Our Vision

A healthy and thriving environment for the future

## Our Purpose

Healthy environments, economies and communities

We strive to be a world class regulator



### Learning mindset

- We continuously develop to build and maintain trusted expertise in all relevant disciplines and operations.



### Outcomes focused

- We articulate and are relentlessly accountable for clear outcomes that focus on the effective delivery of public value.



### Responsive and adaptive

- We proactively listen to identify and respond to risks with contemporary tools, technology and data to reduce harm.



### Purpose and people-centred

- We are fundamentally purpose driven and enable a people-centred culture to create a safe and great place to work.



### Service orientated

- We work collaboratively with community, government, stakeholders, and our people to influence and enable outcomes.

## Our Focus



### Ecologically sustainable development

We champion sustainable approaches to mitigate the cumulative impacts of industry on local communities and environments.

#### Outcomes

- Government and industry decision-making about planning and the environment mitigates against the cumulative impact of environmental degradation.
- Local government is supported to drive sustainability and environmental enhancement through regulation and land use planning.
- Regulatory decisions use a 'place-based approach' and consider as a whole ecosystems such as water catchments, airsheds, ecological communities and climatic regions, and work with industry, our co-regulators and the community in these areas.



### Waste

We take action to reduce the harmful impact of waste and drive behaviours that create a circular economy.

#### Outcomes

- The harmful impacts of waste are reduced and waste minimised.
- Community and industry actively contribute to a circular economy.
- Resilient systems and robust markets are available to keep waste materials circulating and to de-carbonise the NSW economy.



### Water quality

We take action to ensure sustainable and safe water for the community, ecosystems and for economic prosperity and to support cleaner waterways.

#### Outcomes

- The supply of safe drinking water for all NSW communities is increased through cleaner waterways.
- Water quality is improved in beaches, rivers, creeks and community water supply dams.



### Legacy and emerging contaminants

We take action to prevent harm by targeting our efforts on high-risk legacy, current and emerging contaminants.

#### Outcomes

- Our regulatory approach adapts to mitigate risks from identified emerging and legacy contaminants. The EPA is a trusted and influential source of advice for community and business about contaminants.
- Industry is supported to identify hazards, assess the risks, and implement effective controls to protect the environment and the community from contaminants.
- Communities are safe from harmful contaminants.



### Climate change

We take action to reduce emissions, mitigate climate change impacts and build greater environmental and community resilience aligned with the principles in the NSW Net Zero Plan.

#### Outcomes

- The EPA is an active government partner on climate change policy, regulation and innovation.
- Communities and industries are better prepared to respond to extreme weather events.
- Industry contributes to Net Zero objectives and adapts to climate change impacts.
- Consumers are supported to make better choices in response to the causes and impacts of climate change.
- Government decision-making about planning and the environment mitigates against the risks and impacts of climate change.



# Our **capabilities**, our **systems**

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## **Regulatory strength & innovation**

### **We are fundamentally changing the way we regulate**

We are building a regulatory strategy that focuses our regulatory activities and approaches to achieve the best outcomes.



## **Smart with data**

### **Our decisions and actions are informed by data, science and research**

We are building a data and digital strategy that will invest in horizon scanning, intelligence, scientific analysis and data.



## **Powered by people**

### **Our people are our greatest asset**

We are building a workforce strategy to develop, attract and retain the right staff with the right skills.



## **Influencing for positive outcomes**

### **We influence by building and sustaining networks, coalitions and partnerships**

We are building customer service partnerships and engagement initiatives that create value and enhance our capability to solve environmental problems.

## How we will implement

### **Working with others through supporting strategies**

This plan is intended to complement the NSW Premier's priority for quality local environments and the NSW Government Net Zero Plan. It connects with other supporting plans including NSW Clean Air Strategy, NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy, draft NSW Water Strategy and the EPA's Regulatory Strategy.

### **Measuring, reporting and evaluation**

EPA will report and evaluate progress towards the five focus areas to the Board quarterly. NSW EPA reports regularly to the NSW Government on priority outcomes through NSW Treasury State Outcome measures and Program Performance measures. These relate to the State Outcome of connecting communities to resilient and sustainable energy and local environments.

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