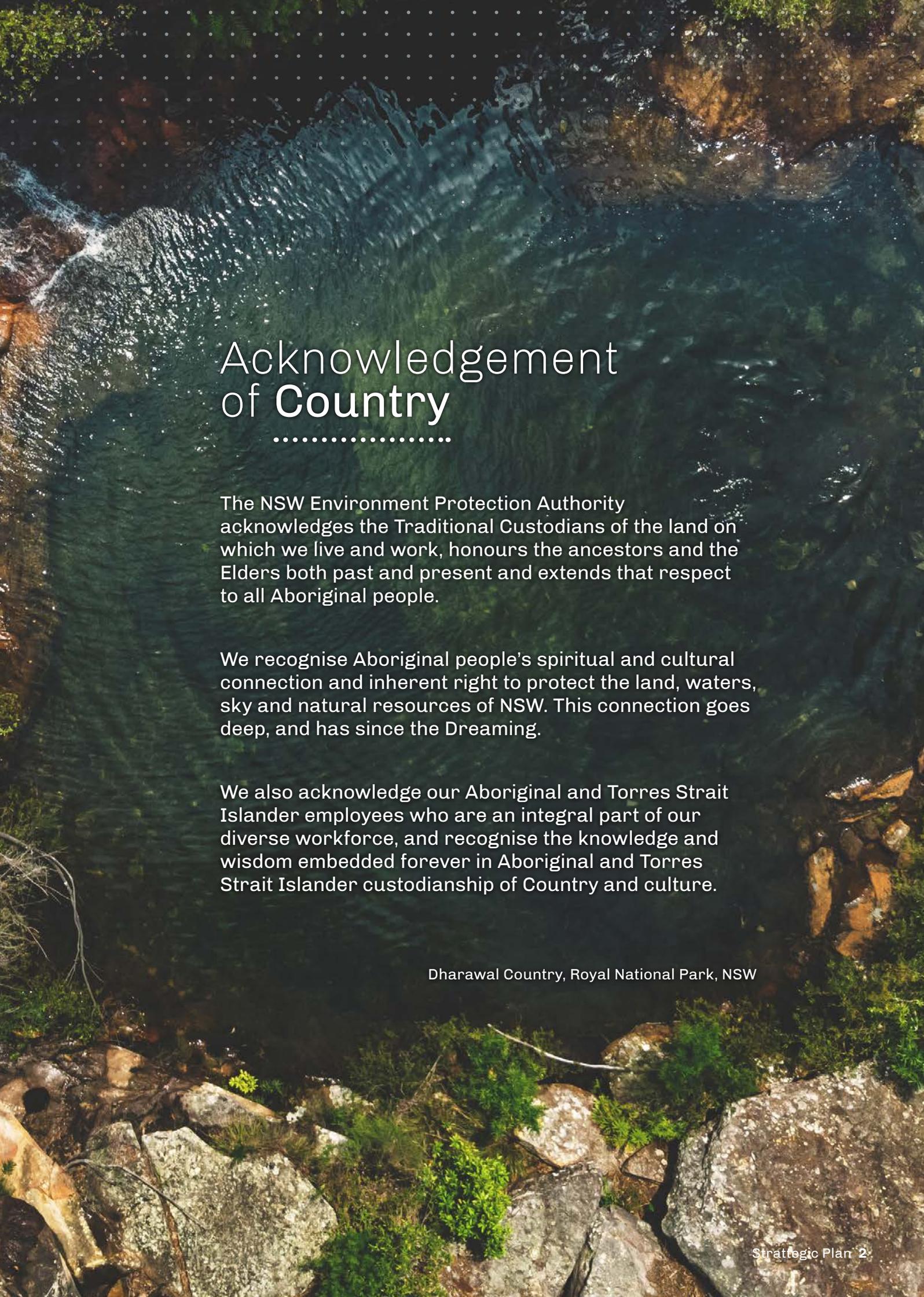


Environment Protection Authority

Strategic Plan 2021–24





Acknowledgement of Country

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The NSW Environment Protection Authority acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live and work, honours the ancestors and the Elders both past and present and extends that respect to all Aboriginal people.

We recognise Aboriginal people's spiritual and cultural connection and inherent right to protect the land, waters, sky and natural resources of NSW. This connection goes deep, and has since the Dreaming.

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

Dharawal Country, Royal National Park, NSW



EPA Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal People of NSW

The NSW Environment Protection Authority acknowledge Aboriginal peoples as the enduring Custodians of the land, sea, waters and sky of New South Wales.

We recognise the entire NSW landscape, including the lands, waters, plant and animal species and seas, has spiritual and cultural significance to all Aboriginal people of NSW. By this understanding there is no separation of nature, wellbeing, and cultures. The health of the natural environment, and the health of people and culture are intimately connected.

Upon the release of this Statement of Commitment and in the spirit of reconciliation, the EPA is committed to:

- Work in respectful partnership with Aboriginal peoples
 - Actively learn from and listen to Aboriginal voices, Culture and Knowledge
 - Respect Aboriginal people's knowledge and science as an equal to western science
 - Weave Aboriginal Knowledges and Science with conventional science into the EPA's decision making
 - Act boldly and bravely to play our part to mend and heal Country together
- Ensure Aboriginal Knowledge, Science and Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP) is protected, and Aboriginal people have Free, Prior Informed Consent
 - Address both the tangible and intangible cultural elements of environmental protection
 - Deliver on results that have direct benefits for Aboriginal communities
 - Embed consistent, meaningful, and trustworthy engagement with Aboriginal communities
 - Develop Aboriginal cultural competency across the agency
 - Increase Aboriginal employment across the agency to exceed public sector Aboriginal employment targets and to identify specific occupational gaps
 - Monitor the impact of the commitment to Aboriginal peoples, Country, culture and spirit.

NSW EPA – the State’s primary environmental regulator

As the steward and regulator of the environment we are committed to a sustainable future.

We are proud to play a role in protecting NSW’s natural environment. We partner with Aboriginal people, industry and the wider community to protect, restore and enhance our diverse ecosystems.

We work with others to ensure that our policy, program and regulatory approaches remain at the forefront of good practice. These connections allow the EPA to share knowledge and learn from others as part of a continual improvement cycle. The development of harmonised approaches to environmental concerns across the country allow regulatory effort to be distributed and reduce industry’s compliance effort and costs.

We bring scientific expertise, experience and actions to inspire innovative solutions as we transition our state to a net-zero and circular economy.

Our Strategic Plan 2021–24 together with our Regulatory Policy and framework describes how we will use all of our regulatory tools to protect and enhance the environment we live in today and in the future.

Strategic Focus Areas

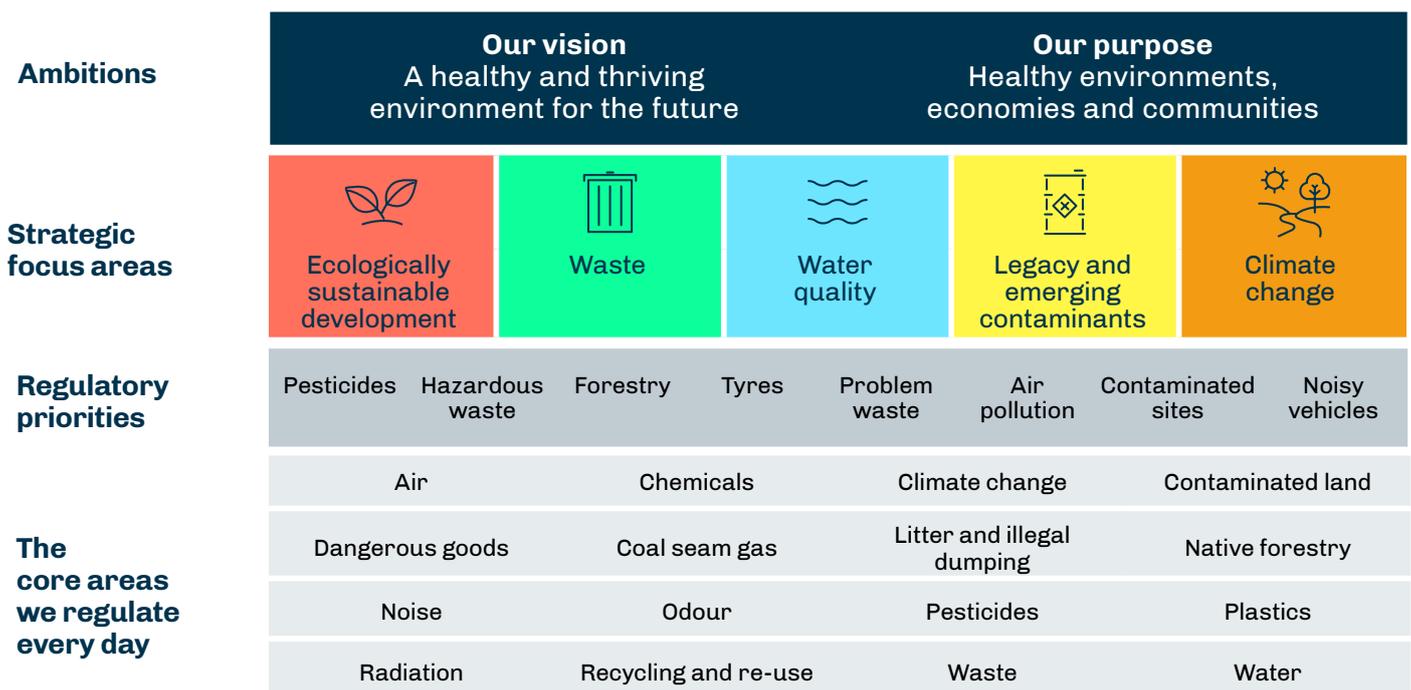
We have identified five areas of focus for the next three years where we will take action to be the courageous voice of the environment, finding evidence and science-based solutions to some of our most formidable environmental challenges.

Regulatory priorities

We have shorter turnaround regulatory priorities to tackle near-term critical hazards to community and environmental health. These focus on issues that are growing in prevalence, and where early intervention is critical.

Core operations

Our core work ensures our land, air and waterways are protected, restored and enhanced for our community and generations to come. The diagram below illustrates how our core work, short-term and medium-term priorities align to achieve our strategic ambitions.



The diagram above illustrates how our core work, regulatory priorities and strategic focus areas align to achieve our strategic ambitions.

Considerations shaping 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 and evidence-based 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 uses 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 for which we are responsible.

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

As an evidence based and contemporary 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.



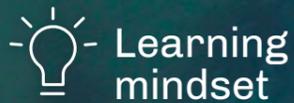
Our Vision

A healthy and thriving environment for the future

Our Purpose

Healthy environments, economies and communities

We are a modern, effective regulator



Learning mindset

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

We are improving how we regulate and tackle environmental and human health problems.

Our decisions and actions are determined by science and evidence-based modelling and by working closely with and learning from Aboriginal People.



Outcomes focused

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

We have built a regulatory framework that focuses on the impact of what we, industry and the community do, rather than just on setting and following rules. We combine enforcement and education, business and community partnerships and economic mechanisms to address challenging environmental issues.

Our central response system and front of door community Environment Line are at the heart of the EPA's improved service to resolve incoming requests and issues.

We will use our discretion to take regulatory action that is proportionate, fit for purpose and appropriate to the circumstances.



Responsive and adaptive

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

We work collaboratively with Aboriginal People and local communities, government, industry and the regulated community, and NGOs to solve problems and protect the environment and human health. We partner with other regulators to improve regulatory practice and reduce regulatory overlap.

We promote place-based approaches to ensure cumulative impacts or sources of potential harm on the environment or human health from activities that are specific to a place are considered. We are investing in horizon scanning, intelligence, scientific analysis and data.

The EPA statement of commitment reminds us to – among other things – listen more to Aboriginal voices, respect Aboriginal people's knowledge and science, and deliver results that have direct benefits for Aboriginal communities.



Purpose and people-centred

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

Our purpose informs everything we do – healthy environments, economies and communities.

Our workforce strategy will continue to develop, attract and retain the right staff with the right skills.



Service orientated

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

Being service-oriented, we are bringing community, government, industry and other stakeholders together to solve problems, responding in a timely manner to requests, queries and incidents, and communicating clearly and respectfully with meaningful content.

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

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 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, the noise environment, ecological communities and climatic regions, and work with industry, our co-regulators and the community in these areas.

Deliverables

- Enable and support ecologically sustainable development (ESD) with timely and accurate data, intelligence and insights.
- Prioritise statutory planning referrals based on risk so those that are high-risk to ecologically sustainable development are assessed according to the EPA's policies and guidelines.
- Promote intergenerational equity by building partnerships with planning authorities and providing evidence-based environmental advice to reduce impacts to human health and the environment and minimise land use conflicts within Special Activation Precincts, Regional Jobs Precincts and major rezonings.
- Development of a capacity building program for local government to support decision making.



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.

Deliverables

- Continue to act on problematic and unnecessary plastics as per the NSW Plastics Action Plan.
- Support NSW councils to provide Food Organics, Garden Organics (FOGO) recycling services.
- Improve efficiency and effectiveness of Return and Earn beverage container recycling services.
- Introduce carbon abatement opportunities for a more circular economy.
- Review the NSW Waste Levy to encourage recycling and resource recovery, and diversion of waste from landfill.



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 groundwater, beaches, rivers, creeks and community water supply dams.

Deliverables

- Embed Aboriginal knowledge and values in our decision making to strengthen the protection of clean water through culturally appropriate engagement of Aboriginal People, in culturally appropriate timeframes.
- Work collaboratively to improve water quality in groundwater, at beaches, in the ocean, rivers, creeks and community water supply dams.
- Ensure the EPA is trusted by the NSW community (the EPA is a trusted voice for water quality).
- Facilitate that end-use water goes to the optimal spot.



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.

Deliverables

- Identify abandoned underground petroleum storage system (UPSS) sites across NSW and undertake a risk-based site prioritisation focusing on risk to human health.
- Undertake risk-based assessments of former landfill sites in Greater Sydney.
- Review the application of financial assurance on licensed activities with potential to cause site contamination.
- Assess the human health and environment risks of the Top 10 Chemicals of Concern.
- Implement state based requirements for the national Industrial Chemical Environmental Management Standard (ICHEMS).
- Conduct compliance campaigns to assess the implementation of national codes for radiation protection in high risk sectors.



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 and the NSW Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.

Outcomes

- The EPA is a leading government partner on climate change policy, regulation and innovation.
- NSW communities and businesses understand how climate change may impact their activities, and are adapting to build resilience to those impacts.
- Our regulated community, especially our licensees, are making fair and reasonable emission reductions to help NSW meet its net zero targets.
- EPA has embedded climate change considerations into its decision-making processes and is supporting NSW to address the causes and consequences of climate change.

Deliverables

- Implement the EPA's Climate Change Action Plan 2023–26.
- Establish priority industry sector advisory groups to support implementation of the Action Plan.
- In partnership with the Department of Planning and Environment, improve how climate change is considered in planning applications.
- Set emission reduction targets for key licensed industry sectors (or parts of those sectors).
- Develop climate change mitigation and adaptation guidance for licensed industry.
- Review the Environmental Services Functional Area Supporting Plan (EnviroPlan) to ensure it has adequately addressed climate risks.

How we will implement and measure

Measuring, reporting and evaluation

We are committed to continual improvement of our regulatory approach. We will make changes to improve our services and regulatory processes over time. We will plan, carry out and then measure the success or otherwise of a change to ensure that it results in a better outcome.

The EPA reports to EPA Executive, Board, and the people of NSW on its performance in realising the EPA's vision for a healthy and thriving environment for the future. We track against the following cross-government indicators. Results are also summarised in the EPA's Annual Report and Board's annual Regulatory Assurance Statement.

EPA State outcome indicators and program measures

Indicators of human and environmental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proportion of high risk/proactive inspections undertaken for compliance with environmental standards (Target >95%)• Number of environmental incidents impacting human health and the environment (Target 7,400pa)
Waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduction in plastic litter by 30% by 2025• Reduction in overall litter by 60% by 2030• Resource recovery rate 80% by 2030• Beverage container recovery rate (Target 80%)• Community access to Container Deposit Scheme return points (Target >90%)• Percentage of targets met for public education and awareness programs about environmental matters (Target 95%)
Legacy and emerging contaminants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 95% of notified contaminated sites are assessed, and a decision on whether regulation is required is made, within four months of notification
Ecologically sustainable development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proportion of planning matters, assessed as high-risk to ecologically sustainable development, responded to by the due date• 95% of high-risk Crown forestry operations are assessed as having no major non-compliances with the relevant Integrated Forestry Operations Approvals• 95% of priority Private Native Forestry (PNF) operations are assessed as having no major non-compliances with the relevant PNF Codes of Practice
Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proportion of disaster recovery programs completed within approved timeframe (Target >90%)• Number of households with access to new Food Organics, Garden Organics (FOGO) recycling services (Target 2 million new households by June 2030)• New measures to be developed alongside the development of the Strategic Plan 2024–30
Water quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New measures to be developed alongside the development of the Strategic Plan 2024–30

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