

Modern Slavery Statement 2023-24

This is Central Highlands Water (CHW) Modern Slavery Statement 2023-24 in accordance with the *Modern Slavery Act 2018 (Cth)*.

Traditional Owners Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the region we operate within, including the Dja Dja Wurrung, Wadawurrung, Wurundjeri, Djab Wurrung, Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk Peoples and pay our deepest respect to their Elders past and present.

We acknowledge their role as custodians of land and water for many centuries and their continuing culture, contribution and connection to Country is vital to the life of this region.

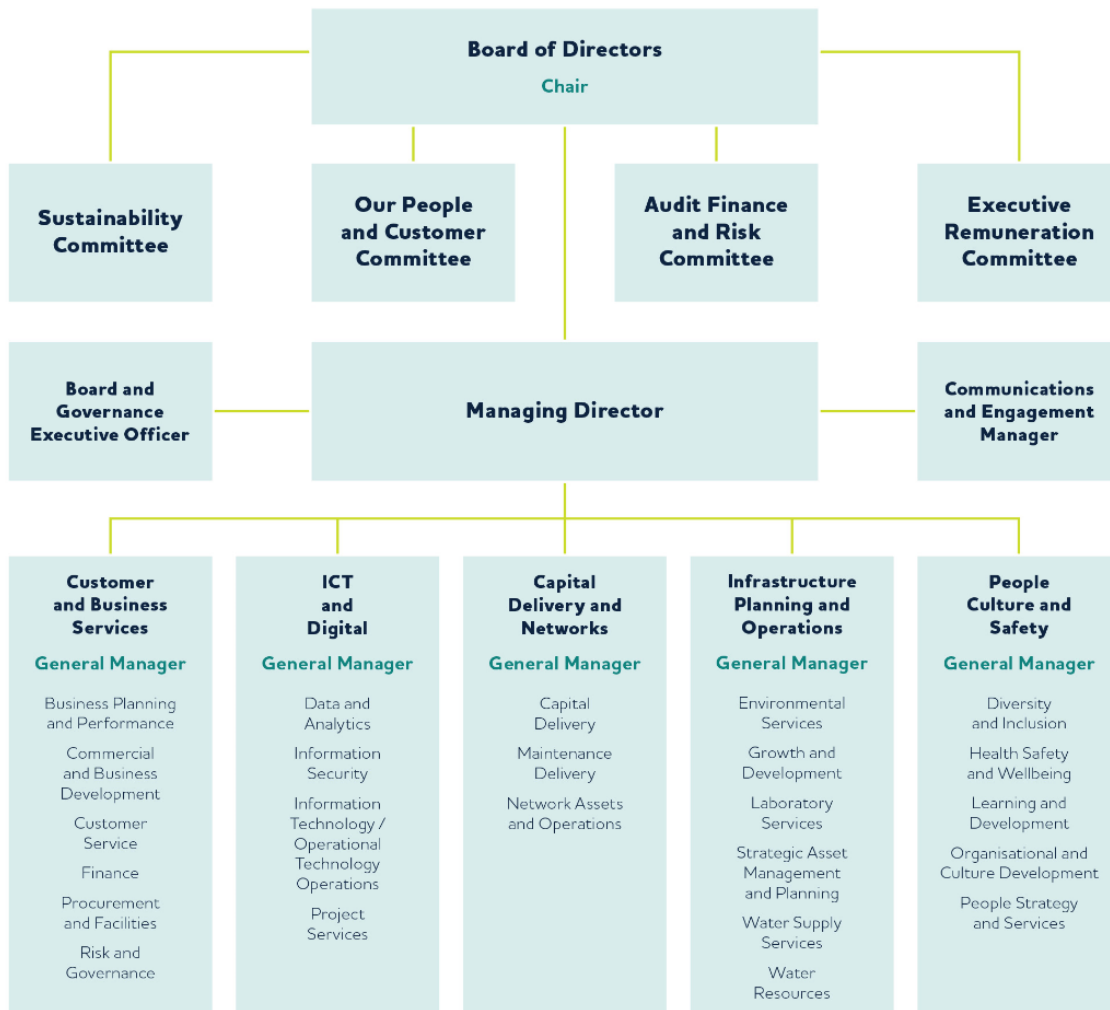
About CHW

CHW, with its administrative center in Ballarat, is one of eighteen regional urban water corporations formed under the Water Act 1989. CHW is fully owned by the Victorian Government and reports to the Minister for Water via the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA). CHW provides water supply and sewerage services through 78,173 water supply connections and 68,039 wastewater service connections to 184,087 people.

Our area of operations takes in 9,275 square kilometers. Straddling the western fringes of the Great Dividing Range, our service area incorporates the local government areas of Ballarat City Council, Central Goldfields Shire Council, Golden Plains Shire, Hepburn Shire Council, Pyrenees Shire Council, Northern Grampians Shire Council and Moorabool Shire Council (refer to Attachment A).

CHW do not own or control any other entities.

Operational structure



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Our Operations and Supply Chain

CHW current strategic priorities are represented by the following strategic framework.

Progress against each strategic outcome is regularly reviewed by each relevant Board sub-committee. CHW supports the progression of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, which is a national commitment by the Australian Federal Government.



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CHW's is committed to the procurement of goods and services that achieve sustainable value for money, whilst enabling and facilitating the delivery of services to our customers that demonstrates transparent and accountable expenditure of public funds.

CHW seeks to achieve this commitment by complying with the following principles:

- provision of a safe workplace
- sustainable business practices
- value for money
- open and fair competition
- accountability and responsibility
- risk management
- probity and transparency.

Our key operations and supply chains are:

Operations	Supply Chains	
Asset Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water treatment services • Waterways • Operations & maintenance of assets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operation & maintenance of facilities • Land care services & conservation management
Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engineering, Constructions & Major Projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engineering consulting / technical services
Corporate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase & lease of properties • Electricity, gas, utilities • Commercial travel • Freight, couriers & mail • Temporary labour hire • Professional services • Marketing & advertising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff training services • Fleet purchase, maintenance & operation • Stationery & office equipment • Security services • Research • Insurance services
Customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call centre services • Customer research services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debt collection services • Printing of bills & notices
Equipment & Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply & Storage of chemicals • Hire of construction equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service & maintenance of equipment • Consumable supplies
Information Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply of IT hardware • Telecommunication expenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT Software & licensing • IT Services

Risk of Modern Slavery Practices

CHW is a foundation member of the Social Procurement Working Group (SPWG), a VicWater led initiative with representation from various Victorian Water Corporations, with a focus on sharing information, promoting consistency in policy and processes, and supporting strategic approaches in supply chains including modern slavery risks.

The ambition behind the creation of the SPWG was for the representing Water Corporations to take an industry lead position in managing sustainability issues and opportunities, namely environmental, social, and economic issues, and opportunities within their supply chains.

With sustainability issues including modern slavery risks recognised as particularly important, and common across Victorian water corporations, a collaborative approach to their management has been adopted.

The Modern Slavery Act 2018 (Cth) and the Victorian Social Procurement Framework confirmed the appropriateness of this approach to expedite and inform effective actions.

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The SPWG established and published their Terms of Reference on the VicWater website to ensure consistency in understanding and set a solid foundation for the development and progression of their program of work.

Understanding outcomes of the risk assessment

The SPWG Group jointly funded a third-party specialist Action Sustainability (now incorporated into KPMG Banarra) to design a supply chain risk assessment tool to assist its members to evaluate the degree modern slavery existed in their supply chains.

It was designed with the purpose of assessing the categories of procurement spend of Victorian water corporations for sustainability risks and opportunities, including human rights. Forty-one categories of product and services covering typical procurement spend of water corporations were assessed and structured into six portfolios: Asset Maintenance, Construction, Information Technology Consulting (ITC), Equipment and Material, Corporate, and Customer.

The risk scores and commentary produced by the completion of this supply chain risk assessment identified human rights risks, including modern slavery risks, across all six portfolios of typical water corporation procurement spend. The categories of spend within each of these portfolios that presented human rights risks are outlined below:

- **Asset Maintenance portfolio:** Ongoing operations and maintenance of facilities (including cleaning), grass cutting, herbicide application/edge treatment.
- **Construction:** Construction labour (minor and major projects) and offshore engineering services
- **Corporate:** Temporary staff, labour hire and traineeship programs, security
- **Customer:** Debt collection services, customer research services
- **Equipment and Materials:** Mechanical and electrical equipment, chemical products
- **Information Technology:** Offshore IT Services

Our actions

CHW continue to support the Victorian State Government commitment to ethical, sustainable, and socially responsible procurement through the inclusion of the Supplier Code of Conduct (Code) in all tender processes. To be considered, Tenderers must declare their adherence to this code.

The code describes the minimum expectations of the conduct of its suppliers in relation to:

- integrity
- ethics and conduct
- conflicts of interest
- gifts, benefits, and hospitality
- corporate governance
- labour and human rights
- health and safety
- environmental management

In 2021–22 CHW developed and refined a new Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility Plan 2021–2025. In addition, as a requirement of the Gender Equality Act 2020, CHW created an inaugural Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) 2021–2025. Both the Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility Plan and the GEAP continue to support CHW's commitment to diversity, inclusion, equity, and accessibility.

Looking Forward

CHW recognise that our actions to identify and address our modern slavery risks including our supply chains are an ongoing and evolving process that we are committed to continue to build upon. To assist in our development, CHW are in the process of implementing a cloud based modern slavery tool kit made available to Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) members following an open tender process. The tool, currently being used by a number of major Water Corporations effectively collects data from suppliers using a set of shared questions as agreed by WSAA members. The advantage is that suppliers only need to complete the survey once by entering their data into the Informed 365 platform and water utilities can access their responses. The platform provides a dashboard that includes a supplier risk assessment based on the question responses.

CHW will continue to strengthen our stance against modern slavery by embedding this toolkit into our tendering processes particularly in those supply chains identified as being of substantial risk.

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The Victorian State Government's Supplier Code of Conduct (Code) will continue to be mandated in all tender processes with failure to complete or non-conformances resulting in tenderers being excluded from the tender evaluation. Any breaches occurred during the previous year will be documented in the annual supplier contract performance report.

Our Procurement Policy, Framework and practices will continue to support with the objectives and actions from our GEAP 2021-25.

Approval

This Modern Slavery Statement was approved by the Board of Central Highlands Water on 10 December 2024.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Haydon', written in a cursive style.

Jeff Haydon
Managing Director
Central Highlands Water
12 December 2024

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Attachment A CENTRAL HIGHLANDS WATER SERVICE AREA

