

28 June 2018

Auditor-General's report to parliament

Regulation of water pollution in drinking water catchments and illegal disposal of solid waste

There are important gaps in how the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) implements its regulatory framework for water pollution in drinking water catchments and illegal solid waste disposal. This limits the effectiveness of its regulatory responses, according to a report released today by the Auditor-General for New South Wales, Margaret Crawford.

The EPA has not established reliable practices to accurately and consistently detect non-compliances by licence holders, and apply consistent regulatory responses. The EPA also could not demonstrate it has effective governance and oversight of its regulatory operations in an environment where its regional offices have broad discretion in how they operate.

'These deficiencies mean that the EPA cannot be confident that it conducts compliance and enforcement activities consistently across the State and that licence holders are complying with their licence conditions', said Ms Crawford.

The EPA has regulatory responsibility under the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* for significant and specific activities which can potentially harm the environment. The EPA regulates diverse activities such as manufacturing, chemical production, electricity generation, mining, waste management, livestock processing, sewerage treatment and road construction through its licencing, monitoring and enforcement activities.

To address the deficiencies, the report recommends the EPA should:

- implement a performance framework to assess and report on its environmental and regulatory performance and trends over time
- update its policies and procedures, and implement controls to monitor the consistency and quality of its regulatory operations.

The report further recommends the EPA review the impact of its licensed activities on water quality in Lake Burragorang and develop strategies relating to its licensed activities (in consultation with other relevant NSW Government agencies) to improve and maintain the lake's water quality.

Further information

A full copy of the report is on the Audit Office website.
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