

The page features a decorative graphic of several overlapping, wavy, horizontal bands in various shades of teal and light blue, extending from the left edge towards the right. The bands have a soft, ethereal quality with some transparency, creating a sense of movement and depth.

Section 3 Agency overview

Agency overview

Commission roles and functions

The National Water Commission is an independent statutory authority within the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio. It was created to drive the national water reform agenda. Established under the *National Water Commission Act 2004*, the Commission provides advice to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and the Australian Government on national water issues.

The Commission reports directly to the Australian Government Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator the Hon. Penny Wong, who was appointed on 3 December 2007.

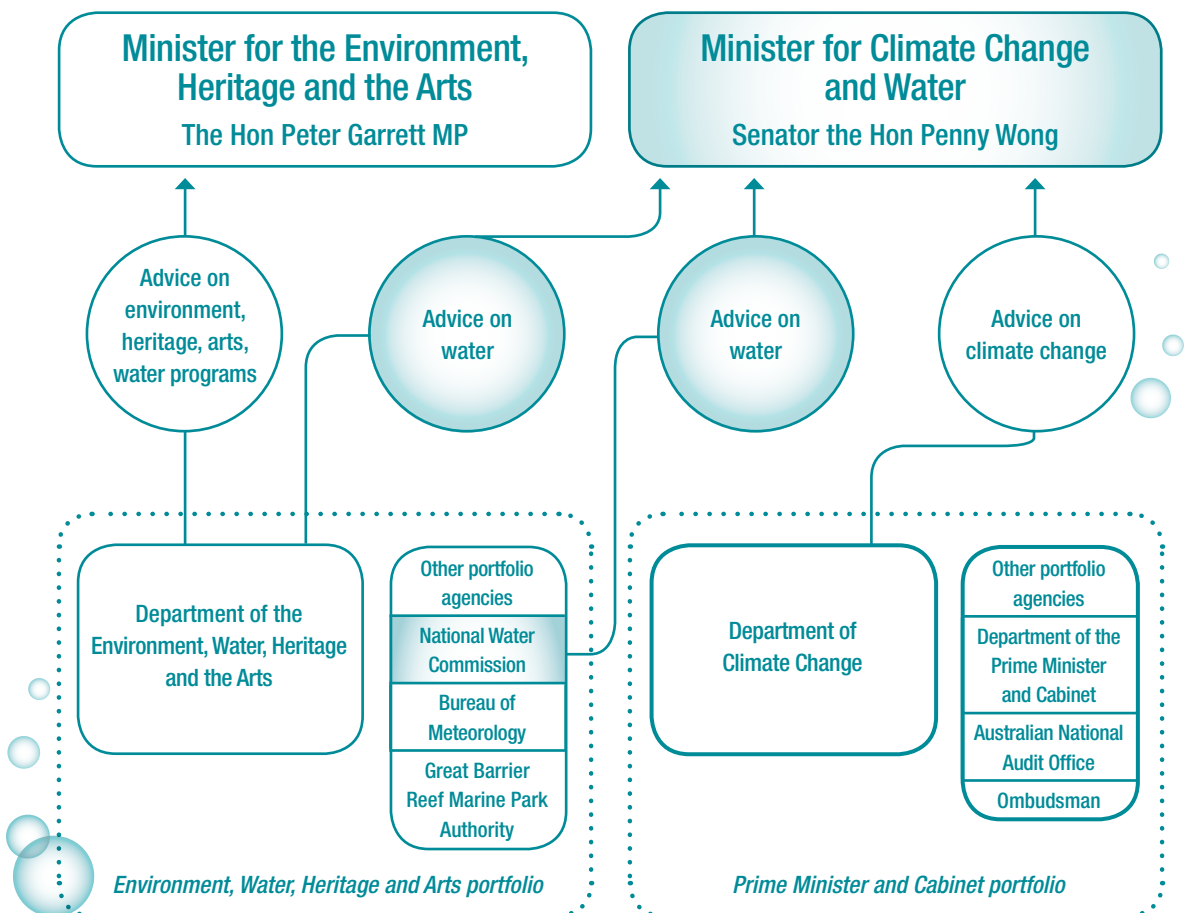
The Commission has two main roles:

- + assisting governments with the implementation of the National Water Initiative (NWI) and undertaking activities that promote the objectives of the NWI
- + administering the Water Smart Australia Program (until 30 June 2008) and the Raising National Water Standards Program.

The Commission also:

- + advises the Australian Government Minister for Climate Change and Water and state and territory governments on the progress of the NWI

Figure 2: Portfolio relationships and accountability



- + provides advice to the Australian Government and COAG on matters of national significance relating to water, including the sustainable management of water resources and access to, and use of, water
- + reports regularly and independently on opportunities to advance water reform
- + advises the Minister in relation to any Commonwealth water-related program
- + advises on conformance of reforms and projects with the objectives of the NWI
- + will audit the effectiveness of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and water resource plans

- + if delegated to the Commission by the COAG Reform Council, will assess the performance of the Murray-Darling Basin states under Commonwealth–State water management partnerships.

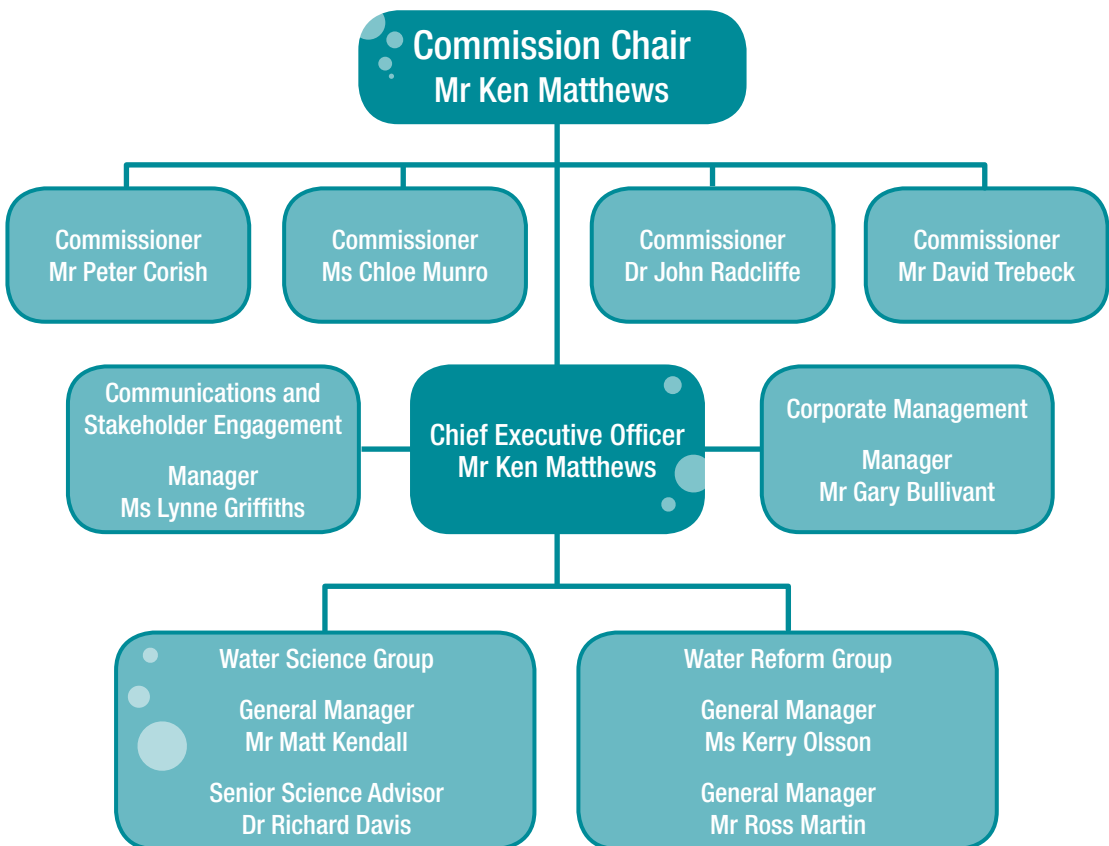
Commissioners

Seven commissioners make up the National Water Commission. The Australian Government nominates the chair and three other commissioners. The NWI partners—state and territory governments—are consulted on the chair’s appointment and nominate the three remaining commissioners.

Commissioners are appointed by the Governor-General for terms of up to three years. They are appointed in

Organisation structure

Figure 3: National Water Commission organisational structure at 30 June 2008



recognition of their expertise in areas such as water resource policies and management, relevant scientific disciplines, public sector governance and administration of natural resource programs. Commissioners are not representatives of any jurisdiction or industry sector. The role of the commissioners is to:

- + provide advice on the strategic policy framework for the Commission
- + provide guidance on major reports or other advice to the Minister or to COAG
- + promote the role of the Commission and the NWI reforms
- + monitor the quality of corporate governance within the Commission, and review the Commission's performance.

At the close of this financial year, the serving commissioners are Mr Ken Matthews, Mr Peter Corish, Ms Chloe Munro, Dr John Radcliffe and Mr David Trebeck. Commissioner Dr Wally Cox resigned in October 2007. Commissioner Professor Peter Cullen passed away in March 2008.

The Commission is headed by the Chair, Mr Ken Matthews, who is also the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The chair's role, under sections 9, 19 and 22 of the *National Water Commission Act 2004*, is to:

- + convene and conduct meetings of the Commission
- + manage the operations of the office of the Commission
- + keep the Minister informed of general operations
- + represent the Commission externally and speak on its behalf
- + facilitate a constructive and collegiate mode of operation
- + manage declarations of interest by, and other arrangements for, commissioners.



Professor Peter Cullen

Peter Cullen, AO 28.5.1943 – 13.3.2008

The National Water Commission was deeply saddened by the death of Professor Peter Cullen in March 2008. As a commissioner of the National Water Commission, and in his many other roles, he made an unrivalled contribution to national water reform.

Fellow commissioners and staff of the Commission were honoured to have worked closely with Peter Cullen over many years. He was a passionate, articulate and intellectual contributor to Commission meetings. During his three years as commissioner he mentored many Commission staff in their endeavours to advance water reform in Australia.

Professor Cullen was Chair of the Victorian Water Trust Advisory Council, a director of Land & Water Australia, and a member of the Natural Heritage Trust Advisory Committee, the International Water Academy, the International Ecology Institute and the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists. He was also founding Chief Executive of the Cooperative Research Centre for Freshwater Ecology at the University of Canberra.

Peter combined his scientific expertise with a rare ability to communicate in simple and readily understood language to lay audiences. His principal concern was the fragile nature of our rivers and wetland systems and the policy and practical actions needed to safeguard them. He was a public and accessible voice for science and for the environment.

Peter was honoured in his lifetime by numerous awards and honours including Officer of the Order of Australia for services to freshwater ecology and the Prime Minister's Prize for Environmentalist of the Year in 2001.

Table 1: Commissioners as at 30 June 2008

Ken Matthews AO (Chair)	Mr Matthews is both Chair and Chief Executive Officer of the National Water Commission. He has an economics degree from the University of Sydney, and is a Fellow of the Institute of Public Administration and the Australian Institute of Management.
	Mr Matthews received a Centenary Medal for services to public administration in 2001, and was appointed Officer of the Order of Australia in 2005.
	Mr Matthews has held the positions of Secretary of the Department of Transport and Regional Services, and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.
Peter Corish	With his family, Mr Corish owns and operates a farming business with properties in New South Wales and Queensland. The Corish family has won several awards for excellence and environmental sustainability in cotton production. Mr Corish is the Executive Chairman of a publicly listed company, PrimeAg Australia Ltd, which owns and operates irrigated and dryland farming properties in northern New South Wales and Queensland.
	Mr Corish chaired the Agriculture and Food Policy Reference Group. He is a member of the COAG Reform Council and is Chairman of the Australia–Japan Foundation. He was awarded a Centenary Medal in 2001 for services to the expansion of Australia's trade and interests in the trading system.
	Mr Corish has held the positions of President of the National Farmers' Federation (NFF) and Chairman of Cotton Australia Limited and the Australian Cotton Industry Council, and has served on the NFF Executive Committee. He has chaired the Sheep and Wool Industry Taskforce, been a member of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers' executive, and is a former member of the Trade Policy Advisory Council and the Business Roundtable on Sustainable Development.
Chloe Munro	Ms Munro is Executive Director, Innovation Projects for the Digital Future, at Telstra. She has strong commercial skills and expertise in public policy and corporate finance, drawing on experience in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. She moved to Australia in 1996.
	Ms Munro has held the positions of Secretary of the Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment, and of the Victorian Department of Primary Industries. She was Deputy Secretary of the Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance.
	She has been a member of the board of Food Science Australia and a commissioner and deputy president of the Murray-Darling Basin Commission.
	Ms Munro holds masters degrees in mathematics and philosophy from Cambridge University and in business administration from Westminster University. She was awarded a Centenary Medal in 2001.

John Radcliffe AM

Dr Radcliffe is a member of the Council of the University of Adelaide, the Board of Earthwatch Australia and Chairman of the Eminent Scientists Group advising the Director of Quarantine on Import Risk Assessment.

Dr Radcliffe has an agricultural science degree from the University of Adelaide and a PhD from Oregon State University. He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering, the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology, the Australian Society of Animal Production and an Honorary Research Fellow at CSIRO.

He was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for his personal contribution to the development of museums in South Australia in 1987, and was appointed Member of the Order of Australia for his contribution to natural resource management in 2001.

Dr Radcliffe has held the positions of Deputy Chief Executive of CSIRO and South Australian Director-General of Agriculture. He directed the ATSE studies of Pesticide Use in Australia in 2001–02 and Water Recycling in Australia in 2003–04.

He has been a board member of the South Australian Arid Areas Catchment Water Management Board, Chairman of the South Australian Research and Development Institute, and a deputy commissioner and commissioner of the Murray-Darling Basin Commission.

David Trebeck

Mr Trebeck is a professional economist who operated his own consultancy company, ACIL Consulting, now ACIL Tasman, for over 20 years. His consulting assignments included resource economics, natural resource management, and almost all facets of agriculture, transport and microeconomic policy reform. Mr Trebeck is the chair of the Commission's Audit and Risk Committee.

He has an honours degree in agricultural science from Sydney University, a masters degree in economics from the University of New England and is a Churchill Fellow. He has dryland mixed farming interests in south-western New South Wales.

Mr Trebeck is a non-executive director of a number of companies, including Graincorp, PrimeAg, Penrice Soda Holdings and companies in the region associated with the Danish shipping company AP Møller-Maersk.

Mr Trebeck is a former director of Incitec Pivot, Incitec and Pipers Brook Vineyard, and board member of the Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation. He chaired an Australian Government inquiry into fuel taxation in 2001–02, was a member of the Agriculture and Food Policy Reference Group, and is currently a member of the Quarantine and Biosecurity Review Panel.



National Water Commissioners, June 2008: left to right Ms Chloe Monro, Dr John Radcliffe, Mr Ken Matthews, Mr Peter Corish, and Mr David Trebeck

Commission meetings

Under the Act, commissioners are required to meet at least eight times during a calendar year. Over the period 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008 commissioners met on nine occasions, with meetings held in Emerald (Queensland), Adelaide (South Australia), Brisbane (Queensland) and Canberra.

Meetings in both urban and regional areas have provided commissioners with opportunities to inspect a range of water systems and discuss local water reform issues and approaches. Commissioners have also scheduled associated meetings with state agencies, industry group representatives, water users and other stakeholders.

Table 2: Summary of Commission meetings in 2007–08

Meeting number	Meeting date and location	Attendees
05/2007	3-4 July 2007 Canberra	All attended
06/2007	12 September 2007 Emerald	All attended
07/2007	2-3 October 2007 Canberra	All attended
08/2007	5 December 2007 Canberra	One apology: Prof Peter Cullen
01/2008	5 February 2008 Adelaide	All attended
02/2008	4-5 March 2008 Canberra	All attended
Extraordinary Meeting	19 March 2008 Canberra	All attended
03/2008	24 April 2008 Brisbane	All attended
04/2008	23 May 2008 Adelaide	All attended

Executive management

Chair and CEO

The Commission Chair and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Mr Ken Matthews, reports directly to the Minister for Climate Change and Water and is accountable to her for the effective and efficient operation of the Commission as a prescribed agency under the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*. In addition to specific responsibilities under section 24 of the Act, the CEO has overall responsibility for the strategic direction and operations of the Commission, and for administering Australian Government water programs managed by the Commission.

Operational groups

Water Reform Group

The Water Reform Group is responsible for policy and assessments in relation to the NWI. It works closely with the parties to the NWI to assist them to meet their commitments, and monitors, assesses and reports on the implementation of the NWI. The group is also responsible for delivering the \$200 million Raising National Water Standards Program.

Water Programs Group

The Water Programs Group administers the \$1.6 billion Water Smart Australia Program. In December 2007

Water Programs Group staff moved to the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, formally transferring on 31 March 2008. During the period December 2007 to 30 June 2008, the CEO of the Commission remained responsible for advising the Minister on the Water Smart Australia Program and for expenditure from the special account. In this role, the CEO was supported by DEWHA staff.

Water Science Group

The Water Science Group provides strategic scientific direction towards water reform, strengthens links with the scientific community, and is developing improved methods for determining environmentally sustainable levels of water extraction. The group is responsible for implementing the \$82 million Groundwater Action Plan, along with the Irrigation and Water Resource Assessment themes of the Raising National Water Standards Program.

Corporate Management

The Corporate Management team is responsible for providing strategic business advice and operational

support for the Commission’s activities and program areas across a range of services including governance, planning, finance, human resources, information technology and property. The team provides secretarial support to the Audit and Risk Committee.

Communications and Stakeholder Engagement

The Communications and Stakeholder Engagement team provides strategic communication advice and coordinates stakeholder engagement activities. The team manages media, marketing and public affairs, as well as the Commission’s web services, publications, events and sponsorships program. It is also responsible for the Commission’s Stakeholder Reference Group and Stakeholder Forum.

Commission Administration

Two administrative staff members comprise the Commission Administration unit, which provides secretariat support to the CEO and commissioners and general administrative support for the operations of the Commission.

Figure 4: National Water Commission program responsibilities at 30 June 2008

Water Reform Group	Water Programs Group	Water Science Group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Administers the \$200 million Raising National Water Standards (RNWS) Program > Policy and assessments in relation to the NWI > Advice on the implementation of the NWI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Administers the \$1.6 billion Water Smart Australia (WSA) Program > <i>Group staff transferred to the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) on 31 March 2008.</i> > <i>The WSA Program transfers to DEWHA from 1 July 2008.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Administers the \$82 million Groundwater Action Plan (funding for which comes from the RNWS and WSA Programs) > Science integration and direction > Administers the Irrigation and Water Resource Assessment themes of the RNWS Program

