



Department of **Water and
Environmental Regulation**



2022-23
ANNUAL REPORT

Department of Water and Environmental Regulation

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Front cover: Department staff Elke Reichwaldt (middle) and Charlie Jones (far right) with Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee members Tim Gamblin, Alan Bewsher and Shaun Ossinger (left to right).

Inside cover: Students' excitement at the 'Fish Olympics' conducted by Alisia Lampropoulos at the annual Children's Gnamara Groundwater Festival.

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Statement of compliance

For the year ended 30 June 2024

Hon Simone McGurk MLA

Minister for Water

Hon Reece Whitby MLA

Minister for Environment;
Climate Action

In accordance with section 63 of the *Financial Management Act 2006*, I hereby submit for your information and presentation to Parliament the annual report for the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation for the financial year ended 30 June 2024.

The annual report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the *Financial Management Act 2006*.



Alistair Jones
Director General
7 October 2024







Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which we live and work throughout Western Australia, and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

We recognise the practice of intergenerational care for Country and its relevance to our work as water and environmental managers.

We seek to listen, learn, genuinely engage and build strong partnerships. We aim to provide sustainable opportunities for Aboriginal people within our workforce and through our business.

Working with the community, we move forward with a shared commitment to protect and conserve Country for future generations, recognising Country is a term used by Aboriginal people to describe the lands, waterways and seas to which they are intrinsically linked, and to which their wellbeing, law, place, custom, language, spiritual belief, cultural practice, material sustenance, family and identity belong.

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Say
YES to
reusable
cups!



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Other requirements

Other legal requirements

Expenditure on advertising, market research, polling, direct mail and media

In accordance with s.175ZE of the *Electoral Act 1907*, the department incurred this expenditure in advertising, market research, polling, direct mail and media advertising. Total expenditure for 2023–24 was \$1,835,762.75 (excluding GST).

Unauthorised use of purchasing cards

In 2023–24, there were 65 instances where a State Government purchasing card was used for personal use. The aggregate amount of personal use expenditure was \$3,716.24. All expenditure was recovered by 30 June 2024. No disciplinary actions were instigated by the notifiable authority during the reporting period.

Act of grace payments

No act of grace payments were made in 2023–24.

Ministerial directives

There were no Ministerial directives in 2023–24.

Expenditure	Total	Expenditure paid to	Amount
Advertising agencies	Nil		Nil
Market research organisations	Nil		Nil
Polling organisations	Nil		Nil
Direct mail organisations	Nil		Nil
Media advertising organisations	\$1,835,762.75	Carat	\$1,225,986.67
		LinkedIn	\$16,167.97
		Facebook	\$96,993.00
		Google	\$70,872.25
		Initiative Media Australia	\$73,014.17
		Seek Limited	\$10,044.05
		State Law Publisher	\$241.09
		Independent and general media	\$28,610.86
		Department of the Premier and Cabinet	\$93.60
		National Retail Association	\$313,739.09
		TOTAL	\$1,835,762.75

Public sector standards and ethical codes

In accordance with s.21 of the *Public Sector Management Act 1994*, the department complies with standards of merit, equity, and probity in relation to human resources activities. No breaches of the Western Australian Public Sector Standards in Human Resources (Employment Standard, Grievance Standard or Discipline Standard) were lodged in 2023–24.



Recordkeeping

We are committed to fostering a robust recordkeeping culture and continually enhancing our tools and practices. This commitment ensures our compliance with the *State Records Act 2000* and drives optimal business outcomes. In accordance with State Records Commission Standard 2, Principle 6, the following information is provided.

Our recordkeeping manual covers the broad range of recordkeeping requirements needed to ensure staff create, manage and maintain departmental records across all formats. This resource supports our business needs and ensures adherence to the legislative requirements outlined in our *Recordkeeping Plan*.



In 2023–24, we achieved significant progress in records management training, with 1,112 employees (88%), including regional staff and those from the Office of the Appeals Convenor, having completed the training. The biennial records awareness refresher training module has been completed by 471 employees.

 1,112 staff have completed record awareness training

 471 staff have completed refresher module

In December 2023, we implemented a new *Information Classification Policy*. By the end of 2023–24, 1,001 employees had completed information classification awareness training.



Government policy requirements

Substantive equality

Our whole-of-department commitment to substantive equality is built into the way we deliver water and environmental management. All processes associated with our management tasks and planning practices are developed with comprehensive input from the community and stakeholders. This development process invites broad public consultation across multiple platforms for comment on draft documents.

We aim to implement substantive equality measures across all operations and departmental functions. This ensures equitable access to our services, to meet diverse individual and cultural needs.



We are committed to improving our recruitment of Aboriginal talent, providing employment opportunities for Aboriginal people within the department and through our business, and strive to be to an employer of choice that respects and celebrates First Nations people.

We are strengthening sustainable relationships with Aboriginal communities, developing respect for their knowledge and deep connection to Western Australia’s land and waterways, and working together to care for Country.

We continue to listen to, learn from and build partnerships with Traditional Owners across the state. As part of our reconciliation commitment, we incorporate and consider

the social and cultural wellbeing as well as the rights of Aboriginal people when working on Country with Traditional Owners. The department incorporates Acknowledgement of Country protocols into all official meetings and events to recognise Aboriginal peoples’ spiritual and cultural connection to lands and waters.

Understanding the importance of cultural safety for Aboriginal employees and cultural competency for our entire workforce, we continue to educate, celebrate and acknowledge First Nations culture and voices. We do this through our internal events for National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week, and on an ongoing basis through training, storytelling and recognition of key partnerships, achievements and days of significance.



► Jawun secondment

The department encourages staff to deepen their experience and understanding of the state's Aboriginal culture and communities and continues to support employee participation in the Jawun program.

Jawun provides a professional development opportunity for government sector staff to undertake a secondment and contribute their skills to support Aboriginal economic development while learning about Aboriginal culture and history.

In 2023–24, three secondments were completed by departmental staff – partnering with the Wunan Foundation in Kununurra, the Kimberley Land Council in Broome, the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council and Derbarl Yerrigan Health Services in Perth.

One secondee joined the Wunan Foundation with a goal to determine and implement a manageable review process to maintain currency of documents and exemplify good governance.

The secondee at Kimberley Land Council focused on identifying ways to make the East Kimberley Energy Project more attractive

to potential funders within the Council's objectives.

The third secondee worked with the senior leadership at South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council to develop organisational reporting processes, and at Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service on an organisational communication and engagement strategy.

All the organisations and secondees learned valuable skills and knowledge that continue to be used long after the placement.



Workforce inclusiveness requirements

Our agency is committed to building a diverse and inclusive workplace. Research shows that agencies that value diversity and inclusion achieve greater staff satisfaction, better customer service outcomes, and improved decision-making and performance. The workforce is more connected, motivated and productive.

As part of the 2023 WA Public Sector Census, our staff were asked about their diversity, whether they had shared this with our agency and, if not, the reason for not sharing. The census was completed by 76.4 per cent of our staff.

The confidence of staff to give voice to their identities, workplace experiences and concerns is an indication of the level of workplace trust, psychological safety and inclusion.

► Our results

The percentage of staff who have shared their diversity information with our agency:

- 81.8 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff
- 34.9 per cent of culturally and linguistically diverse staff
- 64.6 per cent of staff with disability.

A number of staff indicated they had not shared this information with our agency because:

- they did not think it would be kept confidential
- they felt they may be treated differently
- they did not want to be a spokesperson
- they felt they may be limited in the roles they were offered.

The census insights are informing the development of our strategic workforce plan, which will guide us to build a capable, agile and diverse workforce.

Some of the actions we undertook in 2023–24 to improve diversity and inclusion were:



Inclusive access

The department has completed a comprehensive review of its recruitment practices, policies and procedures to ensure there are no barriers to having equitable opportunity in employment for people with disability. In 2023–24, we were accredited as a Disability Confident Recruiter through the Australian Disability Network. We will continue to ensure all employment opportunities are accessible and encourage diversity in employment.

The delivery of our *Disability access and inclusion plan 2018–2023* demonstrates the department's commitment to an inclusive public service. Our next five-year plan (2024–29) is open for consultation from internal and external stakeholders and members of the public until September 2024. The plan outlines the strategic framework of how we will ensure we provide equitable access to our services, information and facilities over seven key outcomes. It helps us to meet and surpass obligations under the *Disability Services Act 1993*, the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984*, and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth).

Western Australian Multicultural Policy Framework

The department's [Multicultural Plan 2023–2026](#), our second such plan, sets out tangible actions against three key outcomes:



Guided by the principles and desired outcomes established in the State Government's [Western Australian Multicultural Policy Framework](#), our multicultural plan

outlines our commitment to actions across our policy, programs and service areas. Through these actions, we seek to promote economic, social, cultural, civic and political participation.

In 2023, the department provided a full report on the outcomes of our first multicultural plan to the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

Safe2Say program

In 2023–24, the department released the Safe2Say program aligned with our Code of Conduct and a new Dignity at Work Policy to help create inclusive and safe workspaces across our business.

Created by Crimestoppers WA, the Safe2Say platform allows staff to report employee misconduct and inappropriate behaviour that has been witnessed, while guaranteeing their anonymity. Staff can use Safe2Say to report bullying, corruption, fraud, discrimination, misconduct and sexual harassment.

Multicultural Policy Framework highlights



Our website has new automatic content translation capability, enabling our content to be accessible in more than 100 languages.



We oversaw department-wide promotion of culturally important days and events, including National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week and Harmony Week.

Work health, safety and injury management

As a department, we prioritise the health and safety of our staff and are dedicated to maintaining a safe and healthy workplace. Our Health and Safety Committee meets quarterly and regularly consults with regional offices through subcommittees. The subcommittees include health and safety representatives, employee representatives and management representatives.

These groups focus on resolving systemic safety issues and continuously improving our work safety and health systems, processes and performance. Our Health and Safety Committee is also responsible for safety risk and hazard identification and awareness. This includes ensuring our department-wide workplace health and safety action plan



Healthy workplace: Mental Health First Aid attendees

is implemented and meets its targets. Locations and details of our health and safety representatives, as well as associated documents and forms, are available to all staff through our intranet.

We are progressing our [Thrive at work: Wellbeing strategy 2023–26](#). Managers are provided with psychosocial risk training and about 50 employees to date have been trained in Mental Health First Aid. The three key wellbeing areas comprise job design, dignity at work and job uncertainty.

► Manager and supervisor training in occupational health and safety and injury management

In 2023–24, the department continued to provide on-site training for managers and employees. The introduction of the MyLearning online training portal enabled the department to conduct health and safety training on a range of topics.

Throughout the year, 1,039 employees completed 135 online health and safety courses, including fundamentals of risk



management which was the most attended course. All managers and employees are required to undertake workplace health and safety training every two years. This training is easily accessible through MyLearning.

We continued to train our health and safety representatives to ensure efficient safety standards and appointed additional workplace health and safety representatives to work closely with management teams. These voluntary roles include undertaking worksite inspections for potential hazards, incident investigation, and communications with department staff.

► Mechanisms for consultation with employees

Our primary mechanism for consultation with employees is through our health and safety committees and representatives. Our incident management reporting system provides a reporting function that can be presented through Power BI portals.

► Commitment to return employees to work after injury

Our comprehensive workers compensation and injury management policy was recently updated to incorporate the provisions of the new workers compensation and injury management legislation. This system ensures we can intervene promptly and effectively in injury management, enabling injured employees to remain at work or return to work at the earliest possible time. This system and our return-to-work programs are compliant with the requirements of the *Workers Compensation and Injury Management Act 2023* and have been reviewed and approved by RiskCover, our department's insurer.

Measures	Results 2020–21	Results 2021–22	Results 2022–23	Targets	Comments towards targets
Number of fatalities	0	0	0	0	The department had 0 fatalities.
Lost time injuries and disease incidence rate	0.1	0.2	0.2	0	While the number of lost time injuries is low, we are continuously reviewing better and more efficient ways of managing risk and injuries in the workplace to reach our target of zero time lost to injuries.
Lost time injury and severity rate	0.1	0	0.1	0	Severe claims are measured against those which have lost 60 days or more.
Percentage of injured workers returned to work within 13 weeks	99.9%	100%	99.9%	100%	Injured employees must return to work in some capacity before 13 weeks, with restrictions on work in the original area of employment or other meaningful work.
Percentage of injured workers returned to work within 26 weeks	100%	100%	99.9%	100%	We have put strategies in place to ensure claimants return to work within 13 weeks, as guided by the clinical advice.
Percentage of managers trained in occupational safety, health and injury management responsibilities, including refresher training within three years	Online training modules for managers 92%	Online training modules for managers 90%	Online training modules for managers 94%	100%	We will continue to provide mandatory injury management training for managers. Refresher training will occur for online modules every two years.

► Performance

Ensuring the health and safety of our workforce is paramount. Our responsibilities are primarily set out under the Public Sector Commissioner's *Circular Code of Practice: Occupational Safety and Health in the Western Australian Public Sector*, as well as the requirements of the *Work Health Safety Act 2020* and the *Workers' Compensation and Injury Management Act 1981*. We comply with the code and the requirements of the Acts. Our performance against targets set in the code is demonstrated in the table below.



Complaints procedure

Feedback on our service delivery is welcome and is used to improve our current offerings. This ensures we consistently deliver the highest quality of service that meets the needs of our stakeholders and customers.

Our [service charter](#) guides our relationship with everyone we work with. We have a dedicated [feedback and complaints portal](#) where stakeholders and customers are encouraged to bring matters to the department's attention so we can action and track inquiries and monitor trends.

We received 23 complaints via our online complaints and feedback mechanism from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024. This process is in line with our service charter.

The complaints ranged from:

- matters not relating to the department's services
- direct feedback on faults on the department's website
- Water Online, Pollution Watch, and EPA submissions requiring redirection
- various operational matters including air pollution data and regulatory functions, including sprinkler rosters.

These submissions were actioned and closed. In the timeframe recorded, no items are yet to be finalised.

This data does not include complaints managed under statutory processes within the department's remit, such as noise, dust and littering complaints.

Freedom of information

It is our commitment to make information available to the public as soon as possible and at the lowest possible cost.

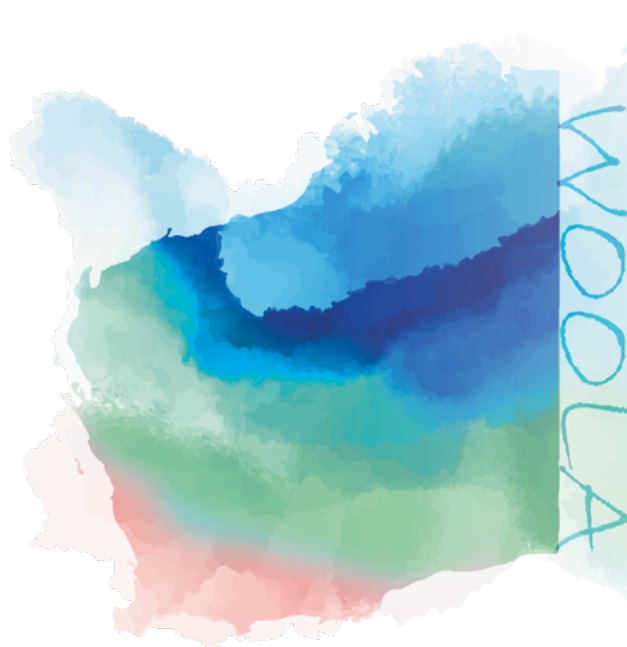
In accordance with s.10 of the *Freedom of Information Act 1992* (FOI Act), a person has a right to be given access to documents of an agency subject to, and in accordance with, the FOI Act.

For the 2023–24 period, we received 233 FOI applications. Of these, five applications were transferred to another agency in full. Of the remaining 228 applications, eight progressed to an internal review (six decisions confirmed, one varied and one pending) and two to external review with the Office of the Information Commissioner (decisions pending).

This financial year:

- the average time taken to process an FOI application was 44 days (the mandatory requirement under the FOI Act is 45 days)
- no personal information applications were received
- 228 applications were for non-personal information
- an additional 49 consultations from other government agencies were processed.





Woola Awards 2024

On 25 June 2024, the department held its fourth annual Woola Awards which coincided with the United Nations Public Service Day. Woola – the Noongar word for 'shout of praise' – sets the tone for this event, with individuals and teams from across our organisation celebrated for their contributions.

Awards are presented across three categories, comprising the:

- Significant Achievement Award
- Aboriginal Empowerment Award
- Recognition of Service Award.



This year, 97 staff members were recognised for their continuous service in the public sector, while the remaining awards highlighted outstanding contributions at work and for living our values.

The 2024 Significant Achievement Award was presented to Michael Whiting for his extensive work for the water measurement and monitoring program and work to empower various teams and stakeholders.

The Aboriginal Empowerment Award went to Mighel Chivilo and Phil Correll for their role in the guidance of the Yamatji Water Monitoring Trainees.

A special mention was given to Mark Williams, who celebrated 45 years of public service. Other recipients of long service recognition included Timotheos Katsavounidis for 40 Years; Teri Burmej, Sharon Gray, Julia Tilleke and Diane McKinnon for 35 years; and Deborah Rohan, Sharon Stratico, Hanna Wardecki, Tim Gentle, Stuart Barter, Malcolm Robb and Stuart Clarke for 30 years of service.

We are committed to ensuring our employees feel valued as we know this directly impacts the level of service delivered to our stakeholders, business units and the community.

We congratulate all nominees and recipients of this year's awards and look forward to the 2025 ceremony.



Appendices

Appendix A: Legislation

Legislation administered by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation as at 30 June 2024

Carbon Rights Act 2003

Contaminated Sites Act 2003

Country Areas Water Supply Act 1947

Environmental Protection Act 1986

Environmental Protection Amendment Act 2020

Environmental Protection (Landfill) Levy Act 1998

Litter Act 1979 (the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation is the agency principally assisting the Minister for Environment in the administration of this Act assisted by the Keep Australia Beautiful Council [Western Australia])

Metropolitan Arterial Drainage Act 1982

Metropolitan Water Authority Act 1982

Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Act 1909

National Environmental Protection Council (Western Australia) Act 1996

Plumbers Licensing Act 1995 (except Part 5A which is administered by the Minister for Commerce principally assisted by the Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety) – alternative citations are *Water Services Coordination Act 1995* and *Water Licensing Act 1995*

Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914

Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2007 (the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation is the agency principally assisting the Minister for Environment in the administration of this Act assisted by the Waste Authority)

Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Levy Act 2007 (the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation is the agency principally assisting the Minister for Environment in the administration of this Act assisted by the Waste Authority)

Water Agencies (Powers) Act 1984

Water Agencies Restructure (Transitional and Consequential Provisions) Act 1995

Water Corporations Act 1995

Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards Act 2006

Water Resources Legislation Amendment Act 2007

Water Services Act 2012

Water Services Coordination Act 1995

Water Services Licensing Act 1995 (also called *Plumbers Licensing Act 1995*) (except Part 5A, which the Department of Commerce administers)

Waterways Conservation Act 1976

Regulations administered by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation as at 30 June 2024

Clean Air (Determination of Air Impurities in Gases Discharged to the Atmosphere) Regulations 1983	Environmental Protection (Kwinana) (Atmospheric Wastes) Regulations 1992	Environmental Protection Regulations 1987
Contaminated Sites Regulations 2006	Environmental Protection (Metal Coating) Regulations 2001	Litter Regulations 1981
Country Areas Water Supply (Clearing Licence) Regulations 1981	Environmental Protection (NEPM-NPI) Regulations 1998	Noise Abatement (Noise Labelling of Equipment) Regulations (No. 2) 1985
Environmental Protection (Abattoirs) Regulations 2001	Environmental Protection (NEPM-UPM) Regulations 2013	Plumbers Licensing and Plumbing Standards Regulations 2000
Environmental Protection (Abrasive Blasting) Regulations 1998	Environmental Protection (Noise) Regulations 1997	Rights in Water and Irrigation Regulations 2000
Environmental Protection (Bilateral Agreements) Regulations 2021	Environmental Protection (Packaged Fertiliser) Regulations 2010	Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery (Container Deposit Scheme) Regulations 2019
Environmental Protection (Clearing of Native Vegetation) Regulations 2004	Environmental Protection (Petrol) Regulations 1999	Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Levy Regulations 2008
Environmental Protection (Concrete Batching and Cement Product Manufacturing) Regulations 1998	Environmental Protection (Plastic Bags) Regulations 2018	Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery (e-waste) Regulations 2024
Environmental Protection (Controlled Waste) Regulations 2004	Environmental Protection (Prohibited Plastics and Balloons) Regulations 2018	Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Regulations 2008
Environmental Protection (Cost Recovery) Regulations 2021	Environmental Protection (Recovery of Vapours from the Transfer of Organic Liquids) Regulations 1995	Water Agencies (Entry Warrant) Regulations 1985
Environmental Protection (Fibre Reinforced Plastics) Regulations 1998	Environmental Protection (Rural Landfill) Regulations 2002	Water Agencies (Infringements) Regulations 1994
Environmental Protection (Goldfields Residential Areas) (Sulfur Dioxide) Regulations 2003	Environmental Protection (Solid Fuel Heater and Firewood) Regulations 2018	Water Corporations (Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2013
	Environmental Protection (Unauthorised Discharges) Regulations 2004	Water Services Regulations 2013
		Water Services (Water Corporations Charges) Regulations 2014
		Waterways Conservation Regulations 1981

Other subsidiary legislation affecting our activities

For all other subsidiary legislation including bylaws, notices, declarations, proclamations, approvals, exemptions, orders, policy, pollution control areas, vesting orders, irrigation districts, standards and guidelines, please visit www.legislation.wa.gov.au.

Other key legislation affecting our activities

In the performance of our functions, the department complied with the following laws:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972</i> | <i>State Records Act 2000</i> |
| <i>Auditor General Act 2006</i> | <i>Workers' Compensation and Injury Management Act 1981</i> |
| <i>Corruption and Crime Commission Act 2003</i> | <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2020</i> |
| <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)</i> | |
| <i>Disability Services Act 1993</i> | |
| <i>Equal Opportunity Act 1984</i> | |
| <i>Financial Management Act 2006</i> | |
| <i>Freedom of Information Act 1992</i> | |
| <i>Government Employees Housing Act 1964</i> | |
| <i>Industrial Relations Act 1979</i> | |
| <i>National Environmental Protection Council Act 1997 (Cth)</i> | |
| <i>Long Service Leave Act 1958</i> | |
| <i>Minimum Conditions of Employment Act 1993</i> | |
| <i>Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)</i> | |
| <i>Procurement Act 2020</i> | |
| <i>Public Interest Disclosure Act 2003</i> | |
| <i>Public Sector Management Act 1994</i> | |
| <i>Salaries and Allowances Act 1975</i> | |

Appendix B: Shortened forms

Term	Definition
AWEAG	Aboriginal Water and Environment Advisory Group
C&D	construction and demolition
C&I	commercial and industrial
Contaminated Sites Act	<i>Contaminated Sites Act 2003</i>
CWSP	Community Water Supplies Partnership
DBCA	Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions
DEMIRS	Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety
department	Department of Water and Environmental Regulation
DMA	decision-making authority
DPIRD	Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
EIA	environmental impact assessment
EP Act	<i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i>
EPA	Environmental Protection Authority
ERRF	Environmental Revegetation and Rehabilitation Fund
EV	electric vehicle
FOGO	food organics and garden organics

Term	Definition
FOI	freedom of information
FOI Act	<i>Freedom of Information Act 1992</i>
GL	gigalitres
ha	hectares
JTSI	Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation
KABC	Keep Australia Beautiful Council
KPI	key performance indicator
LGA	local government authority
MAC	Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation
MAR	Mandatory Auditor's Report
MSW	municipal solid waste
RtR	Roads to Reuse
SCWS	Strategic Community Water Supply
SERS	<i>Sectoral emissions reduction strategy for Western Australia</i>
WA	Western Australia
WALGA	Western Australia Local Government Association
waste strategy	<i>Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy 2030</i>
WIR	Water Information Reporting

Appendix C: References

BoM (Bureau of Meteorology) (2024a) [Western Australia in summer 2023-24](#), BoM website, accessed 6 September 2024.

BoM (2024b) [Western Australia in 2023](#), BoM website, Australian Government, accessed 4 September 2024.

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Kwinana Peel region

► Kwinana Peel regional office

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Goldfields region

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North West region

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South Coast region

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not at all	not really	somewhat	yes	absolutely
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not at all	not really	somewhat	yes	absolutely
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not at all	not really	somewhat	yes	absolutely
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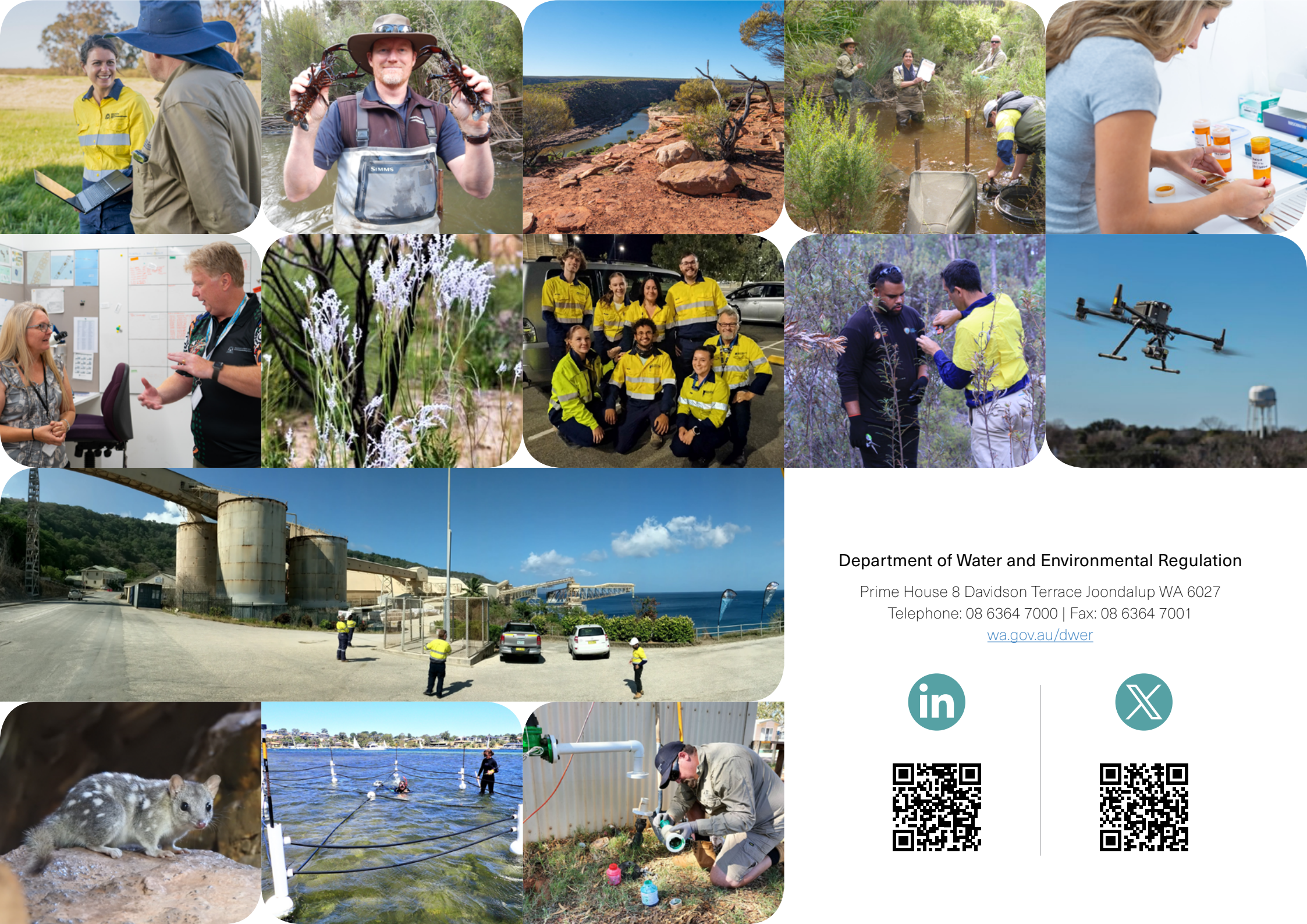
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