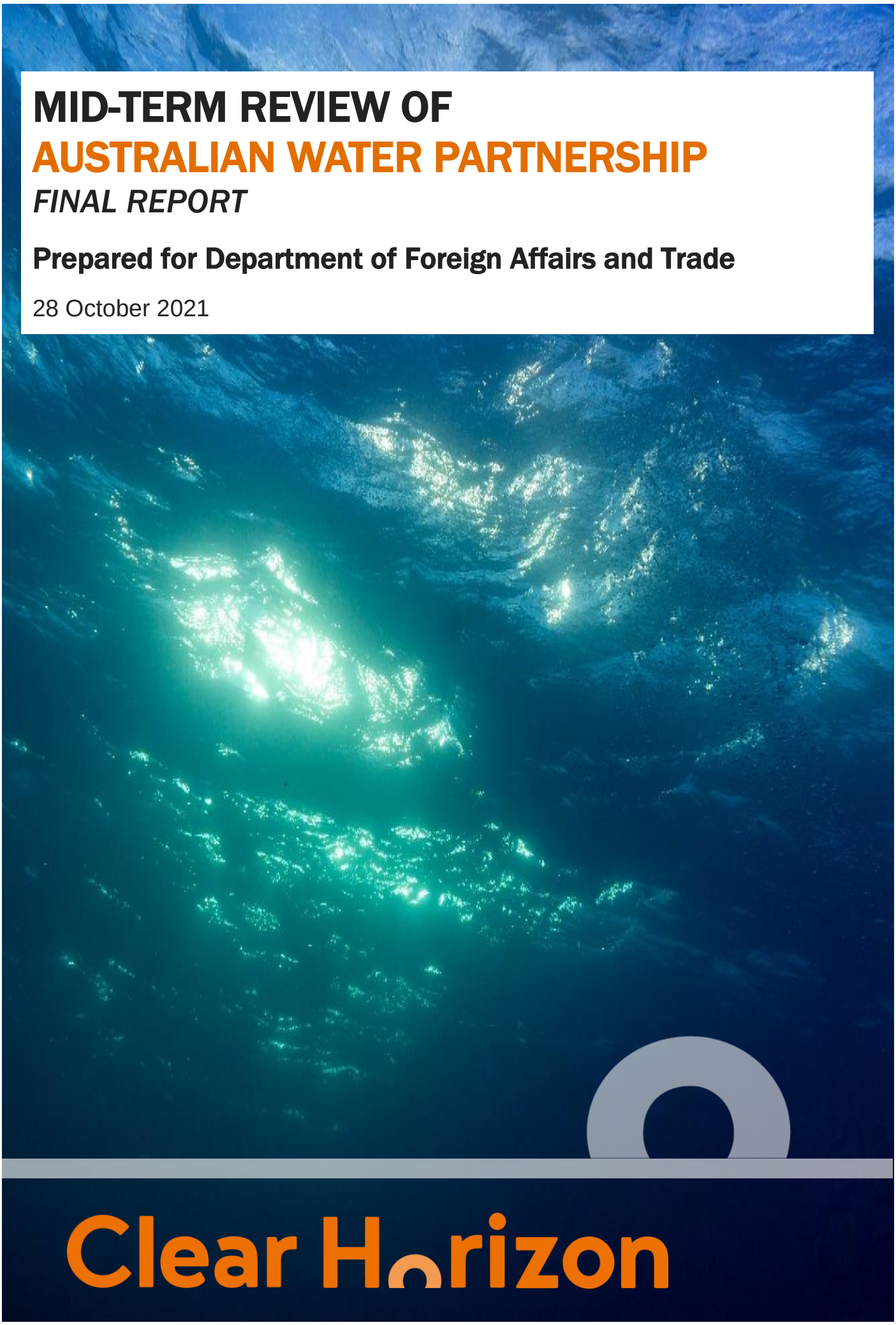
MID-TERM REVIEW OF
AUSTRALIAN WATER PARTNERSHIP
FINAL REPORT

Prepared for Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

28 October 2021



Clear Horizon

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Acronyms

Acronyms	Description
ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
ADAPT	Adaptive Design and Procurement Pathway
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIFFP	Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific
AMPERES	The Australia – Mekong Partnership for Environmental Resources and Energy Systems
AMWF	Australia-Mekong Water Facility
AWA	Australian Water Association
AWDO	Asian Water Development Outlook
AWP	Australian Water Partnership
AWPAC	AWP Advisory Committee
AWS	Alliance for Water Stewardship
BOM	Bureau of Meteorology
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
CSU	Charles Sturt University
DAWE	Department of Agriculture, Water, and the Environment
DEM	Department of Energy Management
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DHOM	Department Head of Mission
DP	Development Partner
DWIR	Directorate for Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems
EDSI	Emergency Dam Safety Inspections
ERP	Expert Review Panel
EWL	eWater Ltd
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GEDSI	Gender, Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
GESI	Gender, Equality, and Social Inclusion
HEC-RAS	Hydrologic Engineering Center's River Analysis System
HEC-HMS	Hydrologic Engineering Center's Hydrologic Modeling System

Acronyms	Description
IA	International Advisor
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
IWC	International WaterCentre
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
KEQ	Key Evaluation Question
KIAT	Indonesia Australia Infrastructure Partnership
KPEC	Knowledge Products, Events, and Communications
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LTO	Long Term Outcome
MARVI	Managing Aquifer Recharge and Sustaining Groundwater Use through Village-level Intervention
MDBA	Murray-Darling Basin Authority
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MEM	Ministry of Energy and Mines
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NHP	National Hydrology Project
NWIC	National Water Informatics Centre
NWRC	National Water Reform Committee
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PacCRN	Pacific COVID-19 Response Network
PERPAMSI	Peak Water Association of Indonesia
PWWA	Pacific Water and Wastewater Association
PYWP	Pacific Young Water Professional Program
SAWASI	South Asia Water Security Initiative
SOP	Strategic Operating Plan
STA	Short Term Advisors
TWP	Thinking and Working Politically
UNSW	University of New South Wales
WASH	Water , Sanitation and Hygiene
WB	World Bank
WEIDAP	Water Efficiency Improvement in Drought-Affected Provinces

Acronyms	Description
WRIS	Water Resources Information System
WRM	Water Resource Management
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature
YWP	Young Water Professional

Acknowledgments

The reviewer would like to thank everyone that assisted the MTR process – by arranging or making themselves available for interviews and informal check-ins, providing data and documents, and providing preliminary feedback. DFAT, the AWP team and stakeholders were open, critically reflective, and constructive, which made for an interesting process.

It was a privilege to review a unique investment like AWP that has such a strong support base. While respondents had a range of views about AWP's performance and what its future should look like, they all believed in AWP as a concept and saw exciting potential in a third phase. The MTR shares this view. Areas for improvement highlighted in this report are in the context of a generally high performing program that has strong foundations in place and is well-placed for continued evolution and growth.

Executive Summary

Overview

The Australian Water Partnership (AWP) is the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) global water resources program and is in its second core funding phase ($24 million 2019-23). Since its inception in 2015, AWP has built a partnership of more than 200 Australian partners in the public, private, and academic sector to deliver technical assistance projects to strengthen water resource management in around 30 countries.

This Mid Term Review (MTR) aims to inform DFAT's decision on a prospective AWP Phase 3 and support ongoing improvement in Phase 2. It examined AWP Phase 2 effectiveness, implementation approach, relevance, gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) arrangements. Data collection involved document review, semi-structured interviews (n=57), observation of AWP training and webinars, a closer review of six AWP activities, and analysis of AWP's activity database.

Findings

To what extent is AWP (Phase 2) progressing against its long-term development outcomes (LTOs)?

Assessing AWP Phase 2 progress is very challenging because its LTOs are out of step with the small scale of AWP activities. Also, most activity-level objectives are not realistic, and results monitoring has been weak. Despite this, AWP reporting shows it has delivered well-regarded technical assistance across all four LTOs. It has provided targeted policy advice and research to inform water planning, allocation, and governance decisions; piloted and scaled new multi-stakeholder approaches to WRM within national frameworks; provided multi-faceted capacity development support to key water institutions and young water professionals; and engaged industry in the concept of water stewardship.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of AWP's model?

Despite AWP's broad **thematic scope,** several respondents commented on the legacy of AWP's initial emphasis on river basin planning. They saw a need to renew AWP's thematic scope in Phase 3, collaboratively with the Australian water industry, and based on DFAT's policy priorities. **Geographically,** AWP's budget allocation largely reflects its priorities, with over half of the budget committed to the Pacific, Mekong, India, and Indonesia.

AWP aimed to develop **strategies for 'priority geographies,'** which it did for Myanmar and India only, and there were mixed respondent views about their usefulness. Current AWP efforts to revive country or regional strategies are important and require further development in the Phase 3 design process. This discussion should be linked to more programmatic approaches to AWP partnership brokering, design and procurement – so that better strategies translate into deeper impact.

AWP's '**demand-led approach**' is not well-understood as an operational model, but it did send a clear message to Australian partners about unsolicited proposals. It is timely to redefine AWP's operational model to show the multiple drivers AWP is balancing.

AWP's most prominent successes have almost always involved close linkages with its **multilateral development partners** e.g. World Bank, highlighting the importance of these partnerships to its success. There are practical ways AWP could deepen these collaborations by adjusting its design and procurement processes e.g., rapid-response STA panel contracts. AWP's most significant **counterpart**

partnerships would also benefit from more formalised commitments, in the form of multi-year partnership agreements.

AWP's **Australian partnership** base is internationally well-regarded. It is also very large, with most partners unlikely to win AWP contracts. AWP's efforts to provide "non-financial benefits" to these partners and link them to consortia are appropriate. More intensive efforts to spread AWP's benefits or build capacity of less competitive partners would risk the quality of AWP activity performance or divert AWP staff time away from other pressing priorities e.g., counterpart partnerships. AWP continues to face difficulties engaging Australian state government agencies in AWP activities. If this is a priority for Phase 3, AWP will need better-tailored ways of engaging them.

AWP's **design and procurement processes** are rigorous and transparent but also carry high transaction costs for AWP and Australian Partners. Alternative tendering processes would be less resource-intensive and a better fit for AWP's partnership model. AWP's preference for short and small-value activities is also worth reviewing in the Phase 3 design, building on the 'tiered approach' proposed by the performance system refresh. It is also timely for AWP to review the extent to which its procurements are **restricted to Australian tenderers** and identify ways to extend **localisation** of Australian partner and AWP staff functions.

While AWP's **governance** structure is complex, alternatives could compromise the legitimate interests of DFAT or eWater Ltd (EWL). AWP has already made activity and procurement outcome approvals more efficient. There is scope to take this further, complementing recent efforts to use AWPAC more strategically. The Expert Review Panel (ERP) is well-regarded, but its narrow remit limits its influence. It could be used more consistently across the activity cycle and to support portfolio-level learning. This would have implications for ERP's skill base, which the Phase 3 design should review.

AWP has undergone several phases of effort to address **conflict of interest risks**. In hindsight, some of these actions should have been taken earlier. There were divergent views among MTR respondents about whether *"bubbling tensions"* about this issue among a subset of Australian partners will reduce with time. This issue has implications for DFAT's decision about implementation arrangements for Phase 3. There were mixed and strong views among MTR respondents about the preferred delivery partner for Phase 3. For AWP staff wellbeing and retention, DFAT should make this decision promptly and provide clarity about any staff novation provisions

How well is AWP addressing gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI)?

Framed by a concise and high-quality GEDSI policy framework, AWP has taken a holistic approach to making AWP more GEDSI-responsive. In terms of AWP activity design and delivery, a significant cohort of Australian partners are now allocating greater resources and prominence to GEDSI in their proposals. However, AWP has weak visibility of how this is translating into activity implementation. As strategies for improving Australian partner GEDSI practice, AWP appears to have the balance right between incentives, standards, and training/coaching. More intensive support to Australian partners would risk diverting resources from other areas, such as cultivating flagship AWP activities that treat GEDSI as a principal objective.

How fit for purpose are AWP's M&E arrangements?

Monitoring and evaluation has been a persistent weakness for AWP in Phases 1 and 2, with performance information falling well short of DFAT's requirements. AWP's current 'performance system refresh' is likely to address these issues. It builds on a revised and simplified theory of change that is a better fit for AWP. AWP is taking a staged approach to the refresh process. Appropriately, the initial

focus is on better defining what success looks like for AWP and how to monitor it. The approach to data collection is sound, but AWP will need to monitor how well DFAT staff and Australian partner fulfill their M&E responsibilities. More work is also required to integrate a focus on GEDSI monitoring. There are also other elements of a quality MEL system (beyond monitoring effectiveness) that AWP could build into the performance system refresh over time.

To what extent is AWP responsive to Australia's priorities?

On AWP's **coordination with DFAT programs**, linkages with Water for Women are strong and could deepen further, while coordination with DFAT Posts is mixed and would benefit from a more formalised approach. Coordination between Canberra- and Post-managed investments is a perennial issue for DFAT and is especially evident in AWP-SAWASI alignment. More broadly, AWP has a track record of proactive **alignment with DFAT policy directions**. Key AWP achievements in this area are a comprehensive gender equality strategy, much larger Pacific portfolio, prompt and multi-faceted COVID-19 response, and early and ongoing efforts to align to DFAT climate change policy directions. AWP is generally DFAT's first port of call for policy and technical advice to support Australia's **water diplomacy**. The Phase 3 design provides an opportunity to clarify DFAT's desired balance between AWP's development, diplomatic, and trade drivers.

Recommendations

AWP is entering a dynamic period of transition that will need to be managed carefully. DFAT's decision about the design pathway for Phase 3 is a critical next step and will need to strike the right balance between AWP ownership, DFAT strategic direction, and external contestability. In this context, the MTR makes seven recommendations:

- Recommendations 1-2 relate to DFAT decisions about its **design and procurement of Phase 3**, specifically the need for clear strategic direction, an appropriate design pathway, a competitive procurement process, and consideration of conflict-of-interest risks.
- Recommendation 3 identifies **key design issues** for Phase 3, such as thematic and geographic focus, approach to portfolio management in priority geographies, partnerships strategy, and AWP activity design and procurement processes. Recommendation 4 recognises the importance of clear Phase 2 **transition arrangements** to align with Phase 3 design decisions.
- Lastly, Recommendations 5-7 include AWP **actions in Phase 2 that are less dependent on Phase 3 design decisions**, including more efficient approval processes, strengthened efforts to improve GEDSI-responsive activity implementation, and improved alignment to DFAT's M&E Standards.

Introduction

About Australian Water Partnership

The Australian Water Partnership (AWP) is DFAT's global water resources program and is implemented by eWater Ltd (EWL). It mobilises Australia's internationally recognised expertise in water management to support DFAT's international development and foreign policy objectives. The program has completed one phase of core funding ($20 million 2015-19) and is now in its second core funding phase ($24 million 2019-23). AWP also implements other grants with specific geographical or sectoral goals.

Since its inception in 2015, AWP has drawn from more than 200 Australian partners in the public, private, and academic sectors to deliver technical assistance projects to strengthen water resource management. Projects have been delivered in around 30 countries in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

AWP's development goal is: *"Enhanced sustainable management of water resources in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond, in turn supporting inclusive economic development, improvements to water security for all, and reductions in environmental and social impacts and regional tensions"*.

The long-term outcomes set in the AWP Strategic Plan 2018-23 (Annex 4) for the core grant are:

- *Improved water planning, allocation and governance by governments, industries, and civil society.*
- *Enhance public, private and civil society engagement and competence in sustainable water management.*
- *More equitable, efficient, and environmentally sustainable water use by public, private and civil society water actors.*
- *Australia is a trusted and valued development partner in water resources management in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.*

AWP proposed a significant revision of these outcomes as part of a 'refresh' of AWP's theory of change and M&E system[1].

AWP Phase 2 ends in June 2023. Informed by the MTR, DFAT plans to decide by December 2021 whether to proceed with the design of an AWP Phase 3.

About this Mid Term Review

Purpose and Audience

The MTR primary audiences are DFAT Water Security Section and AWP Management Team. It aims to:

- provide an independent view of how AWP is performing against expectations to inform (along with other considerations) DFAT's decision on a prospective third phase for AWP. It will also aid DFAT's reporting and oversight of AWP Phase 2.
- guide strategic improvements to AWP, either as part of the Phase 3 design (if approved) or Phase 2 implementation

[1] AWP, *AWP Performance System Refresh 30 June 2021 (working draft)*

Approach and methodology

The MTR was grounded in the principles shown in Figure 1 and guided by key evaluation questions (KEQs), developed in response to information needs of the MTR audiences and in collaboration with DFAT and AWP staff.

Figure 1. Evaluation principles

The Key Evaluation Questions for the MTR were:

1. To what extent is AWP (Phase 2) progressing against its long-term development outcomes?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of AWP's model?
3. How well is AWP addressing gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI)?
4. How fit for purpose are AWP's M&E arrangements?
5. To what extent is AWP responsive to Australia's priorities?

The evaluation plan described key issues for each question, which structure this report (see Annex 4).

MTR data collection consisted of:

- Review of program-related documentation and AWP's activity database
- Semi-structured group and individual interviews (n=57)
- Observation of AWP online training on gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI), thinking and working politically (TWP), and an online webinar on the AWP procurement process.
- A closer review of six purposively selected AWP activities (all six based on document review, and three also based on interviews)

More information on the methodology is available in Annex 4, including sampling and data analysis methods, ethical issues, and limitations.

Findings

KEQ 1: To what extent is AWP (Phase 2) progressing against its long-term development outcomes?

Challenges with judging outcome progress for flexible investments

Assessing AWP Phase 2 progress is very challenging because its long-term outcomes (LTOs)[2] are out of step with the small scale of AWP activities. Like most flexible investments in the Australian Development Program, these outcomes are broad to promote responsiveness across its wide thematic and geographic scope[3]. Their level of ambition is also out of step with the typical scale of AWP activities. The average activity in Phase 2 (excluding KPEC) goes for about a year and spends about $100,000. It would be unrealistic to expect that, for example, *"improved water planning, allocation, and governance"* can occur with this scale of investment.

The disconnect between AWP's LTOs and the scale of its activities has also contributed to over-ambitious AWP activity objectives for which there is limited evidence of progress. Most activity-level objectives are unrealistic, and results monitoring has also been weak (see *KEQ4: How fit for purpose are AWP's M&E arrangements?*) These are significant weaknesses because for flexible investments like AWP, demonstrating the adequacy of overall progress is ultimately about showing that enough activities (projects) are achieving their activity-level objectives (and that these objectives align with overall investment outcomes).

AWP is working to address these issues through a revised theory of change and performance system. A foundation of the new approach is the creation of three AWP activity tiers, each with different and corresponding levels of investment and ambition. This approach will enable more realistic activity objectives and reporting. AWP is also working to address its outcome data gap by compiling several better-evidenced success stories, informed by follow-up data collection after activity completion.

The following section highlights key achievements against AWP LTO 1-3 within the above constraints. LTO 4 relates to partnerships and diplomatic objectives, which the MTR addresses under KEQ2 and KEQ5 below.[4]

[2] AWP's LTOs are: 1) Improved water planning, allocation and governance by governments, industries, and civil society; 2) Enhance public, private and civil society engagement and competence in sustainable water management; 3) More equitable, efficient and environmentally sustainable water use by public, private and civil society water actors; and 4) Australia is a trusted and valued development partner in water resources management in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

[3] These outcomes are, in effect, thematic 'buckets' for grouping results of diverse AWP activities (projects). They are not specific end points we can expect to achieve by the end of the investment, as with more focused programs.

[4] In line with the MTR ToR and plan, the focus of this section is on activities funded by two grant agreements between DFAT and eWater ltd - AWP Phase 2 (74826, $24m) and Supporting Australia's International Water Leadership (74798, $2.4m).

Key achievements

LTO 1: Water planning, allocation, and governance

Improving water policies and practices

- Published a **river basin planning guide** to support the Government of India's Water Policy and master plans for 14 river basins, home to 900 million people.
- Supported CSIRO to prepare recommendations on policy and legal instruments for the **water resources development strategy for the Kamala River Basin** – linked to broader support by the DFAT Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio to the Government of Nepal's National Water Resource Policy and Kamala Basin Initiative.

Strengthening the evidence base

- Developed a **COVID-19 Water Security Risk Index** for 47 countries, identifying potential future water interventions that will decrease vulnerability.
- Conducted social surveys to document the importance of fish to local people and the impact that the Perjaya Irrigation Dam has had on fisheries in the Komering River in Indonesia, with results informing a guideline to **integrate biodiversity into future irrigation investments**.

Promoting inclusive decision-making

- Embedding a participatory **Managing Aquifer Recharge and Sustaining Groundwater Use through Village-level Intervention** (MARVI) model in 7 states (and 20,000 villages), which assists villagers to better manage and share groundwater at the village level. This is part of a $1bn GoI-WB national groundwater management program, and AWP support builds on foundational work by ACIAR. The MARVI project has trained 34 farmers to become "local water experts" and engage village communities in groundwater knowledge and data sharing. AWP report that the model has resulted in 70% less water use by participant farmers. The activity also established Village Groundwater Cooperatives that will assist with MARVI's national scale out.

LTO 2: Engagement and competence in sustainable water management

Strengthening institutional capacity

- Core funding and technical advice for the **Pacific Water and Wastewater Association** (PWWA)—representing 31 water utility organisations across 21 Pacific Island countries. A key focus in Phase 2 has been assisting PWWA to manage and respond to COVID-19 impacts on its revenue and member services. This included online delivery of a Young Water Professionals Program (see below) and establishing a Pacific COVID-19 Response Network that provides related advice, knowledge, and tools to PWWA members.
- Strengthening **water utilities in Indonesia** through a twinning arrangement between Indonesian regional drinking water or wastewater management companies and Australian water utilities. Results for Indonesian partners include certification of improved asset management practice, a reduction in non-revenue water, and updated human resource policies to respond to COVID-19 impacts. The Peak Water Association of Indonesia (PERPAMSI) also used an online platform to enhance communication and technical knowledge sharing with its members, with weekly webinars reaching up to 400 water operators.

Strengthening individual capacity

- Delivery of two multi-year **Young Water Professional (YWP) programs** in Myanmar and the Pacific, which aim to strengthen participant knowledge, skills, confidence, and networks (both have been substantially disrupted by the Myanmar coup and COVID-19 restrictions, respectively). The Myanmar YWP program is a one-year rolling program in which young people from academia and government in Myanmar receive mentoring and training in various water-resources-related technical subjects. Two batches of students in Myanmar participated throughout 2019-20. The Pacific YWP program is delivered through PWWA, and in 2021 included ten virtual sessions over four months to 7–10 participants (a decrease from 30 participants in 2019-20).

LTO 3: Equitable, efficient, and sustainable water use

Promoting water stewardship

- Assisting **Alliance for Water Stewardship** (AWS) to promote the adoption of Water Stewardship Standards and Certification systems. Since 2019, the activity has trained 395 participants from Indonesia, China, and the Asia-Pacific in formal water stewardship. AWS has also provided a range of support to private sector partners in Indonesia and China – including fashion, micro-electronics, industrial parks, and agriculture sectors – resulting in 32 sites certified with the AWS International Water Stewardship Standard.

Improving water efficiency

- Since 2017, AWP has supported the Vietnam **Water Efficiency Improvement** in Drought Affected Provinces project (WEIDAP), a US$120M irrigation modernisation project funded by the ADB. In AWP Phase 2, this included support for establishing eight modernized irrigation schemes across five provinces as demonstration sites for national replication. Drawing on lessons from this activity, AWP has been assisting ADB transfer lessons to a new Sri Lanka Integrated Water Productivity Improvement Project.

KEQ 2: What are the strengths and weaknesses of AWP's model?

Thematic and geographic strategies

Overall thematic and geographic scope

Like many flexible investments in the Australian Development Program, AWP adopted a broad thematic scope for maximum responsiveness, which has been highly valued by DFAT. The Phase 2 Strategic Plan described priority domains of *"river basins, water sensitive cities, irrigation modernisation, and environmental water"* and a focus on activities relating to *"policy, legislation, governance, institutions, planning, modelling platforms, targeted scientific and technical advice, and capacity building."*[5] The 2020 Annual Report noted that AWP excluded no water issues as it *"operates across more than 25 sub-themes."*[6]

[5] Australian Water Partnership, *AWP Strategic Plan 2018 – 2023*, 2018, p12
[6] Australian Water Partnership, *AWP Annual Report 2019 – 2020*, 2020, p7

Despite this, several respondents commented on the legacy of AWP's initial emphasis on river basin planning as the heart of AWP's 'water offer.' Linked to AWP's 'Step Up' in the Pacific, they saw a need to expand AWP's thematic focus into WASH, providing an opportunity to bring more international development and GEDSI expertise into AWP's Partnership and consortia. While some respondents disagreed with this view, DFAT's growing focus on climate change reinforces the need to revisit AWP's thematic scope during the Phase 3 design, ideally collaborating with the Australian water industry (see **Recommendations 3b and 4**).

> *"The reason we are focused on water scarcity and managing river basin planning is because there are strong voices telling that story. But there is a lot of expertise outside the Murray Darling basin e.g. urban water management… It would be good to explore together a broader characterisation of Australia's water expertise."* (Australian Partner)

Geographically, AWP aimed to allocate the bulk of its Phase 2 expenditure to the Indo-Pacific, focusing on the Pacific, Mekong, India, and Indonesia ('priority geographies')**.** The rolling investment plan was the primary mechanism for driving these priorities, overseen by AWPAC, without geographical budget allocations. Over half of the Phase 2 activity budget[7] has been committed to activities in these priority geographies. Mekong is the largest ($3m), followed by India ($2.2m), Pacific ($1.7m), and Indonesia ($1.2m). Compared to Phase 1, the increases in AWP budget commitments were most significant in Indonesia and the Pacific, followed by India. While Figure 3 shows a reduced allocation to Mekong, this is more than offset by the Australia Mekong Water Facility, which has committed an additional $5.8m, as at September 2021. Phase 3 geographical priorities should flow from policy decisions about the relative importance of AWP's development, diplomacy, and trade drivers (see *KEQ5* below).

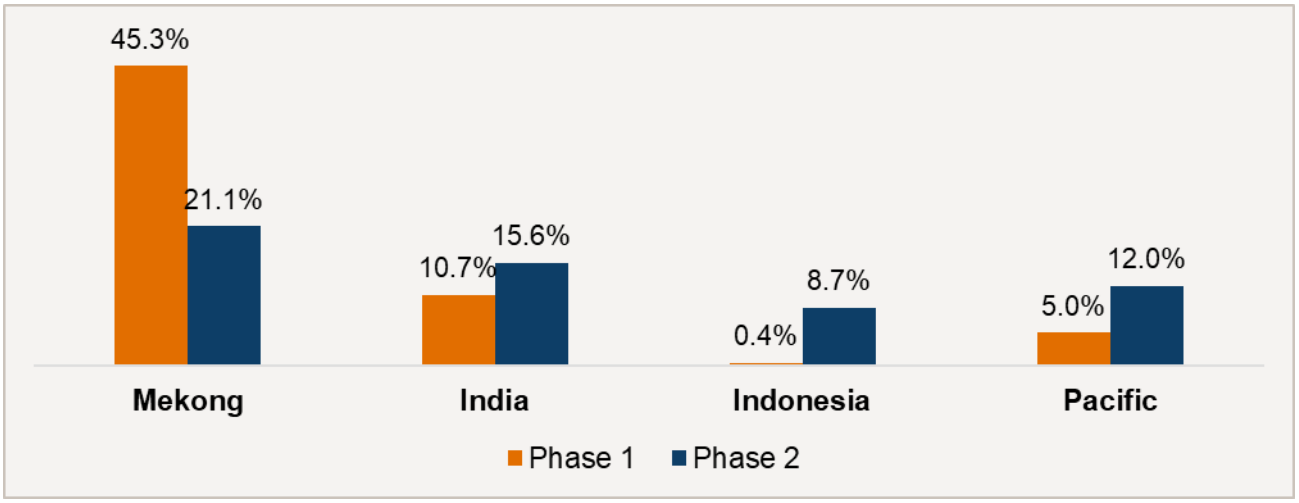

Figure 2: % of Phase 1 and 2 budgets committed to Phase 2 priority geographies

Strategic focus within priority geographies

AWP aimed to develop strategies for 'priority geographies,' which it did for Myanmar and India only, and there were mixed respondent views about their usefulness. They were developed after large activity portfolios were already in place, including legacy activities from Phase 1. Respondents indicated they were mostly used to communicate AWP's scope to Australian partners, in-country partners, DFAT Posts etc. and as a touchpoint for planning dialogue with country counterparts. There is

[7] This includes 'demand-led' activities as well as 'knowledge, partnerships, events, and communications' activities

limited evidence that they were used to drive sharper strategic focus of AWP's portfolio management in these countries. More broadly, AWP lacks internal country situation analyses to help with filtering requests for support. This creates inefficiencies in assessing whether requests match priority country needs, Australian partner capacities, and gaps in development partner support.

AWP is reviving discussion about the merits of country or regional strategies to enhance AWP's impact and alignment to DFAT policies. As one MTR respondent noted, *"the [strategy-driven] concept is good, but the devil will be in the detail."* Key choices to consider as part of the Phase 3 design will be 1) whether to develop strategies at region v country level; 2) how to approach consultation, approval, and periodic dialogue/review – with DFAT, counterparts, and multilateral development partners; 3) what aspects to make internal v external, etc. (see **Recommendation 3c**). In general, a simple approach is prudent given AWP's small team and the need to balance clearer geographical strategies against other priorities, such as stronger partnership processes and more programmatic design and procurement processes. Ultimately, it is difficult to see strategies increasing AWP impact without these more concrete changes to AWP systems (see '*International Partnerships'* and '*Design and procurement'*).

Demand-led operational model

References to a 'demand-led approach' are common in AWP documentation, but there was broad consensus among MTR respondents that the meaning of this approach is unclear. It contains inherent ambiguities about whose demand counts, what counts as demand, and how proactive AWP should be in cultivating demand.

Despite this, several respondents reflected that the 'demand-led approach' served an essential purpose at the start of Phase 2. It conveyed a clear message to Australian partners not to submit unsolicited proposals. It also reinforced to Australian Partners that AWP valued context-responsive, not off-the-shelf, solutions.

In practice, the 'demand-led approach' surfaced a range of practical challenges. AWP staff noted that requests for support tended to be discrete and focused on immediate priorities rather than longer-term needs – although AWP massaged these requests, based on its strategic priorities and understanding of local needs. Also, the demand-led approach constrained AWP's ability to foster counterpart engagement on issues where demand was less evident, such as women's participation in WRM decision-making[8]. Finally, the demand-led approach tended to favour louder voices able to articulate demand in a way that resonated with AWP. This includes DFAT or multilateral partner staff speaking on behalf of country counterparts.

It is timely to redefine AWP's operational model to show the multiple drivers AWP is balancing (see **Recommendation 3a**). For example, Figure 2 overleaf shows that AWP seeks to amplify impact by balancing imperatives to respond to local needs, enhance multilateral partner investments, align with DFAT priorities, and draw on AWP Australian Partner capacities. Importantly, there are cases where AWP must be responsive to requests that fall outside one or more of these four domains, but it is the MTR's view that larger AWP activities should target the intersection of these four imperatives.

[8] Notably, AWP has overcome this constraint by taking a more proactive approach on some issues e.g., the current WASH/WRM pilot with WaterAid

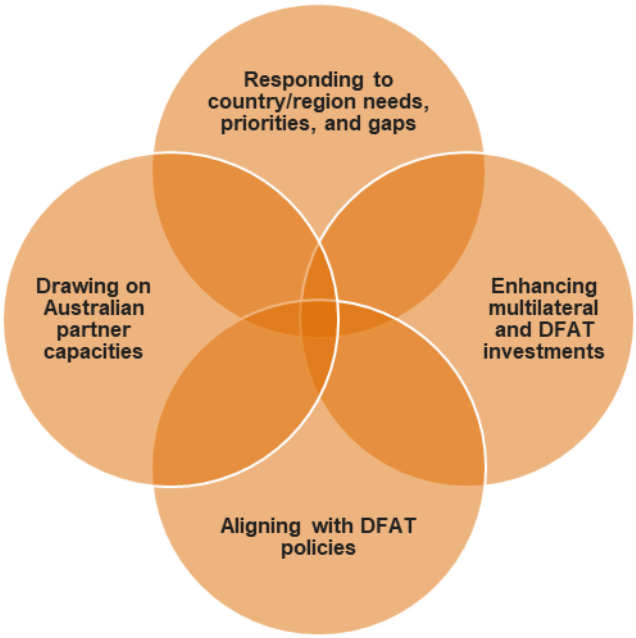

Figure 3: An AWP partnership-based operational model

International Partnerships

'Leveraging' DFAT and multilateral development partner (DP) investments is a well-suited strategy for AWP. Given its global remit and a relatively small budget, anchoring its support within larger investments of DFAT or multilateral partners is an appropriate way to promote AWP impact and sustainability.

This strategy has led to several notable successes, such as MARVI in India (see *KEQ 1*). Indeed, most of AWP's success stories involve working with multilateral DPs. Perhaps surprisingly, there are fewer examples of AWP anchoring its activities within larger DFAT investments. AWP has had positive discussions with the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP) about collaboration, but practical opportunities have been discrete and small-scale so far (*see KEQ 5*).

MTR interviews identified practical ways AWP can deepen collaboration through more tailored ways of working with multilateral DPs. AWP's standard delivery model is to contract Australian partners for discrete project delivery. NextGen with FAO is an example where AWP has adapted this model by combining multiple Australian partner contracts with a grant to the FAO (for coordination and oversight) to deliver on a multi-component program of work designed by FAO, with strong AWP engagement. Multilateral staff respondents highlighted two other ways that AWP can adapt its model to overcome constraints to multilateral DP collaboration (see **Recommendation 3d**). These were:

- *Longer-term funding certainty*: AWP's preference for short-term activities causes difficulties for multilateral project managers working to 3–4-year timeframes. Multi-year funding certainty would make AWP a more attractive proposition for many country office staff. AWP could build in contractual stop/go points to enable oversight and confidence.
- *Rapid-response STA panel contracts*: The transaction costs involved in AWP's standard delivery model can be a deterrent for multilateral staff managing large and complex investments. More efficient mechanisms for accessing Australian water expertise could mitigate this. One suggestion is to recruit a panel of pre-qualified experts on a particular topic or policy area such as GEDSI.

Multilateral DPs would more rapidly draw down on this expertise and AWP would potentially deepen its influence on multilateral DP investments within a specific technical area.

AWP's partnership strategy should better distinguish between 'counterparts' and 'allies.' 'Counterparts' are country- or region-level governmental or non-governmental organisations that are benefiting directly from AWP-funded advice and support. 'Allies' are DFAT programs and multilateral DPs, with whom AWP is partnering to amplify the sustainability and impact of its support to counterparts. These two partner types require different approaches to partnership development and management (see **Recommendation 3d**).

AWP's key counterpart partnerships would benefit from more formalised commitments. AWP recently took the positive step of jointly developing multi-year 'investment plans' with ICIMOD and SPC. There is an opportunity to translate these into formal partnership agreements, perhaps supported by a partnership broker who can help surface difficult but important conversations about mutual risks, rewards, and responsibilities[9]. This approach should also apply at the country level for major counterparts, with whom AWP's relationship is currently constrained by the scope and timeframes of individual activities. Australian partner respondents reported that the current approach makes it hard to convey AWP's commitment to long-term and impactful collaborations. Multi-year partnership agreements would elevate the relationship beyond individual activity cycles. Given that partnership approaches are resource-intensive, AWP should limit this work to a small number of counterparts with whom it is ready to make large and long-term funding commitments (linked to 'Tier C' activities in AWP's refreshed performance framework). (see **Recommendation 3d**).

Australian Partnerships

MTR interviews with DFAT, multilateral, and in-country development partners confirmed that AWP's Australian partnership base is internationally well-regarded. Notably, the positive views of many respondents were based just as much on relational skills of AWP's Australian Partners, like listening and adapting to socio-cultural contexts, as they were on technical proficiencies.

AWP has many Australian Partners. By June 2021, AWP had 221 Australian partners, 71% from the private sector and the remainder from universities, government departments, water utilities, NGOs, technology firms, and industry associations.[10] Figure 4 shows that the rate of growth in AWP's partnership base is plateauing, at less than 3% in 2020-21. However, this may jump higher if AWP expands its thematic scope or removes DFAT's Adviser Remuneration Framework in Phase 3[11]. In anticipation of this, it is timely for AWP to improve its mapping of Australian partner capacities, which AWP staff respondents noted is out of date and not being used to help filter requests for AWP support (see **Recommendation 4)**.

[9] An example of a DFAT investment that did this well is the Pacific Leadership Program.
[10] *AWP Annual Report 2020–21*, Pre-design version (draft v3)
[11] New DFAT contracts no longer apply the ARF. Several interviews with Australian Partners commented that AWP rates were not commercially viable. With unregulated rates in Phase 3, it is possible (but not confirmed by the MTR) that new players may bid for AWP contracts or existing players may bid for more contracts.

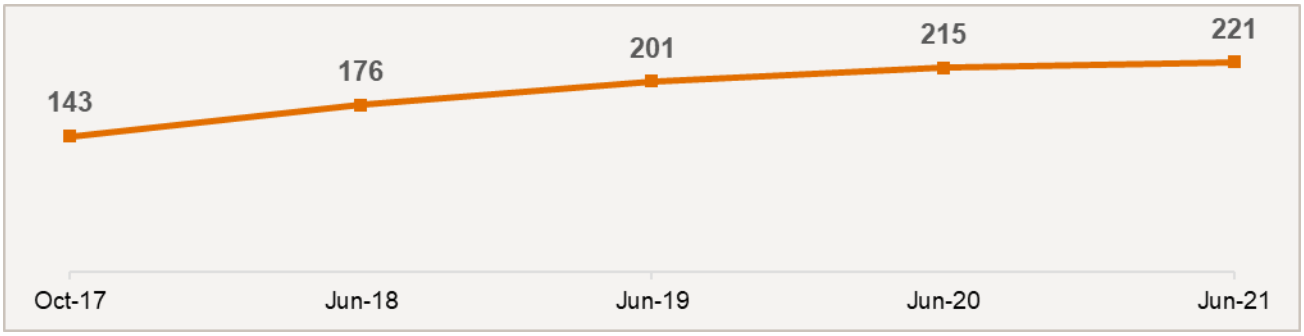

Figure 4: Growth in AWP Australian partnership base since Phase 1 MTR

A large majority of these partners are not winning AWP contracts. AWP has awarded 99% of its Phase 2 committed budget to 40 partners, and the contracts of just 10 of these partners constitute two-thirds of the budget. This concentration of AWP contracts in a small proportion of Australian partners is roughly consistent with Phase 1 (see figure 5).[12]

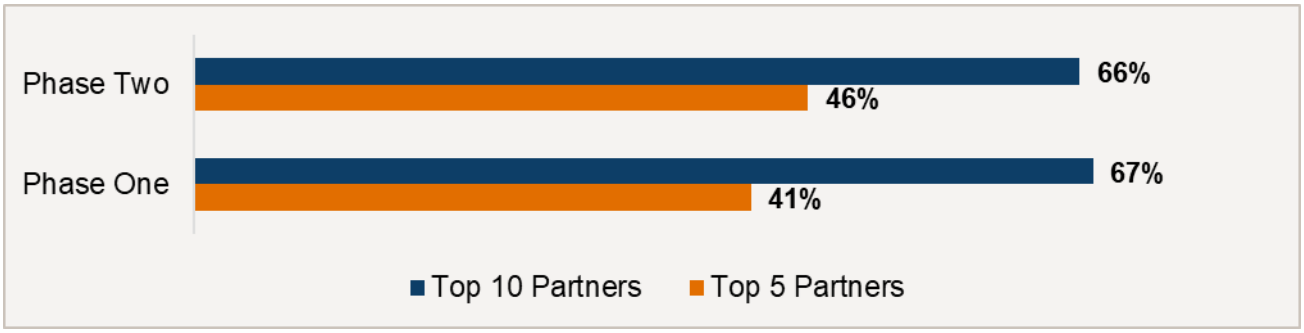

Figure 5: % of committed budget awarded to the top 5 and top 10 AWP contractors (Phase 1, Phase 2)

This raises questions about the value proposition of AWP membership for most partners. AWP's response to this is twofold. First, it actively encourages and helps to broker consortia to bid for AWP contracts. This provides smaller niche partners an opportunity to be part of multi-disciplinary teams led by larger AWP partners. Second, AWP markets a broader range of partnership benefits, such as access to networking, training, and information. MTR interviews with Australian partners confirmed that these benefits are highly valued. The MTR considers these responses reasonable and appropriate. More intensive efforts to spread the benefits of AWP across the partnership base (or build capacity of less competitive partners) would risk the quality of AWP activity performance or divert AWP staff time away from more important outward-facing priorities e.g., developing counterpart partnerships (see **Recommendation 3d**).

AWP continues to face difficulties engaging Australian state government agencies in AWP activities[13]. The opportunity to draw on these agencies' water reform experience was a key reason why DFAT selected eWater Limited (EWL) to implement AWP. MTR respondents reported that resource constraints of these agencies require them to focus on core mandates, and AWP competitive tendering

[12] Rates of concentration are even higher for AWP's AMWF and fee for service funding sources.
[13] Various respondents highlighted the recent reduction in AWP participation by the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM). Reasons are like those for state government agencies. There was an additional suggestion that clearer communication by DFAT at an agency-to-agency level of overall strategic priorities would help commonwealth agencies like BoM to filter the various requests they receive for support. BoM is about to develop an international engagement strategy that will provide an opportunity for this dialogue with DFAT and DAWE.

processes are a significant hurdle to participation. There were varying views about the implications of low state government participation. Some felt that AWP's access to ex-staff of these agencies through consulting firms was an adequate alternative. Others raised concerns about a perceived tendency of consultancies to focus on technical rather than governance issues. At a recent meeting of the National Water Reform Committee (NWRC), AWP requested the appointment of state government agency focal points with whom AWP can explore opportunities for enhanced engagement. If state government involvement is a priority for Phase 3, AWP and DFAT will need to identify more tailored ways to engage them. Examples include delegation of ODA funding, partnership agreements that cover direct and indirect costs of their participation, or revival of the 'water ambassadors' concept proposed by the Phase 1 MTR (see **Recommendation 3d**).

Design and procurement

Beginning toward the end of Phase 1, AWP enhanced the rigour and transparency of its activity and partner selection process in several important ways. AWP clarified selection criteria, reduced direct sourcing, and provided more consistent reporting of selection outcomes to Australian partners. Several MTR respondents saw these improvements as the main legacy of AWP's second CEO and felt that it bolstered the trust of many Australian partners in AWP's procurement systems. Australian partners were also unanimously positive about AWP's flexible and collegiate approach to contract management, including its availability as a sounding board when activities hit roadblocks.

While rigorous, AWP tender processes also carry high transaction costs for AWP and Australian Partners, relating to the drafting and appraisal of detailed project proposals. This is arguably out of step with the relatively small budgets of most AWP activities - over two-thirds of contracts across all funding sources are less than $100,000 (see Figure 6). It also does not reconcile well with AWP's commitment to a partnership approach. Alternative tendering processes that are less resource-intensive for Australian partners (and AWP) but still fair and transparent would be a better fit, e.g., procurement of a lead partner based on a capacity statement, followed by a collaborative approach to activity design. AWP could trial these alternatives for larger activities only, in line with AWP's proposed 'tiered approach' (see **Recommendation 3e**).

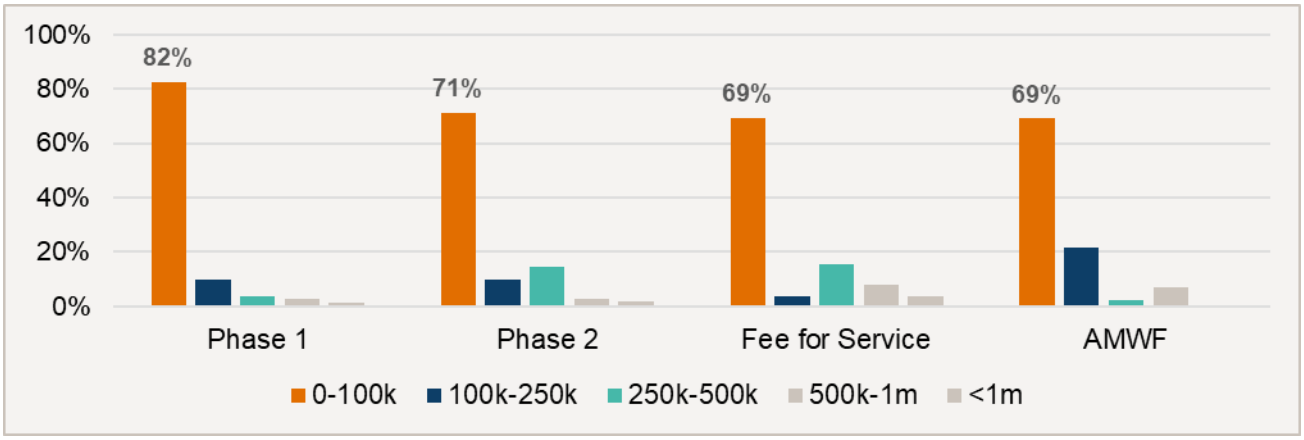

Figure 6: % of AWP activities by value ($) and funding source

AWP's preference for short and small-value activities is also worth reviewing. Some AWP staff respondents saw this as a strength in that it enabled the scope of AWP's support to evolve in a staged manner with each in-country partner. On the other hand, several Australian and multilateral partner respondents experienced small activity timeframes as a constraint to country partnerships and impact – as one Australian partner put it, *"it is hard to achieve development outcomes in two years."* While AWP's

portfolio will always need a proportion of small activities (for rapid responses, exploratory work, etc.) the current level is very high (see Figure 6). The Phase 3 design process provides an opportunity to clarify the desired balance between smaller- and larger-scale activities in AWP's portfolio – building on the tiered approach introduced by the performance system refresh (see **Recommendation 1a**).

Most AWP funding requires that tenderers be registered in Australia[14]. DFAT has a clear rationale for AWP's focus on Australian expertise. Still, there may be ways to untie more AWP funding while respecting this focus. For example, AWP could permit non-Australian organisations to bid for lead consortium partner roles and recruit Australian experts as sub-contractors. Some AWP staff respondents saw the potential for mutual benefits in AWP brokering collaborations between Australian partners and non-Australian organisations. These benefits included better quality AWP activities and wider global networks for Australian partners, leading to broader partnering opportunities. Respondents also stressed the need for initial steps in this direction to be small and carefully monitored (see **Recommendation 3f**).

COVID-19 restrictions have led Australian Partners to localise more of activity implementation. Typically, they have engaged local consultants to conduct aspects of implementation that are less technically complex from a WRM perspective but benefit significantly from local relationships and context awareness. Australian partner respondents stressed the need for local partners to be carefully selected and supported. There have been fewer efforts to localise AWP functions. A recent AWP step in this direction is its current mapping of local actors in the Pacific with whom AWP could potentially partner to support more context-responsive AWP programming (see **Recommendation 3g**).

Governance arrangements

While AWP's governance structure is complex, alternatives could compromise the legitimate interests of DFAT or EWL. There is overlap in the responsibilities of AWP Advisory Committee (AWPAC) and the EWL Board but reducing the remit of either body would compromise DFAT's interest in arms-length oversight or EWL's interest in fulfilling its responsibilities under the *Corporations Act.* While the EWL Board is more active than most DFAT implementing partners in exercising its fiduciary duties, this is its prerogative and possibly a strength of the model.

AWP has taken steps to make activity and procurement outcome approvals more efficient, and there is scope to take this further (see **Recommendation 5**)**.** The CEO can provide approvals up to a maximum of $100,000. For larger activities, the activity concept or ToR is approved by AWPAC, and the procurement outcome (following AWP and expert review) is approved by both AWPAC and EWL Board. Since early 2021, these approvals can occur 'out of session', which has reduced delays. However, AWP reports that it can still take 10-12 weeks between submission of proposals and EWL board approval (about the same as DFAT's timeframe for multi-million-dollar contracts). It is also time-consuming for AWP staff to prepare two sets of approval documentation, which adds to the case for further efficiencies.

A cross-section of respondents highlighted the potential to make greater use of AWPAC and noted recent CEO steps in this direction. Given AWPAC's experience, some AWPAC meeting observers or members saw a need for AWPAC to spend less time reviewing activities and more time on strategic issues (this is already happening for activities funded by the Australia Mekong Water Facility, for which activities are approved by a Coordination Group of AWP and DFAT staff). There would be more tangible opportunities for this strategic oversight if AWP begins to develop country/regional strategies, formal multi-year partnerships with key counterparts, and programmatic approaches for larger

[14] In 2006, the Australian Government removed this restriction for the Aid Program more generally and now invites tenders from non-Australian entities.

activities (see '*Thematic and geographic strategies'*, *'International partnerships',* and *'Design and procurement'*).

The Expert Review Panel (ERP) is well-regarded, but its narrow remit limits its influence. Its members are experienced experts in WRM and GEDSI. ERP advice bolsters the credibility of AWP partner selection decisions, and Australian partner respondents valued its feedback on their proposals (they would also value more opportunities to discuss feedback directly with ERP members). Some ERP members noted that their feedback on proposals would be better if they understood AWP's underlying rationale for the relevant activities. For this reason, and to broaden ERP's influence on AWP's effectiveness, respondents saw value in ERP playing a 'critical friend' role for AWP during activity concept stage - more consistently than they currently do, and perhaps only for larger activities. There are similar opportunities to involve ERP members more in other stages of the activity cycle and in overall AWP learning and reflection[15] (see **Recommendation 3h**).

Even without this broader remit, it is timely to review ERP's skill base. A few respondents saw a need for more social scientists on ERP. It is also notable that ERP members are all based in Australia rather than AWP priority geographies. Two respondents noted that this can lead to a tendency for ERP members to appraise proposed personnel based on the prominence of their role in Australia's water sector rather than their suitability for the activity at hand. Capabilities in program design, MEL, governance, and capacity development could also be more prominent, but to some degree are covered by the AWP team itself. If AWP pivots to a climate change focus, this will also have implications for ERP membership (see **Recommendation 3h**).

Conflict of interest risk

Starting in Phase 1, AWP has undergone several phases of effort to address conflict of interest risk. The prominence of this issue arises from the fact that EWL oversees AWP and is also eligible to bid for AWP contracts. AWP's remedial actions to manage this risk included amending the procurement outcome approval process so that the EWL Board cannot approve the selection of EWL as an AWP delivery partner; strengthening selection criteria; improving transparency to Australian partners about AWP procurement decisions; reducing the use of direct source procurement methods; commissioning a review of AWP procurement guidelines; and, most recently, developing a policy on conflict of interest that codifies pre-existing practices. In hindsight, some of these actions should have been taken earlier.

There were divergent views about whether "*bubbling tensions*" about this issue among a subset of Australian partners will reduce with time. Aspects of the model are still vulnerable to critique. For example, the AWP CEO, AWP staff, the AWPAC Chair, and the Chair of the AWP Expert Review Panel are remunerated by EWL. Also, the EWL Board – as part of its approval function – has access to commercially sensitive details of winning proposals. On the other hand, the EWL Board has decided to pull back from bidding for AWP activities and has received very little of Phase 2's activity budget (see Figure 7). Some respondents also indicated that AWP's growing focus on the Pacific and WASH would make EWL's capabilities less relevant over time.

[15] The current GEDSI review is a good example in that it is being conducted by ERP members.

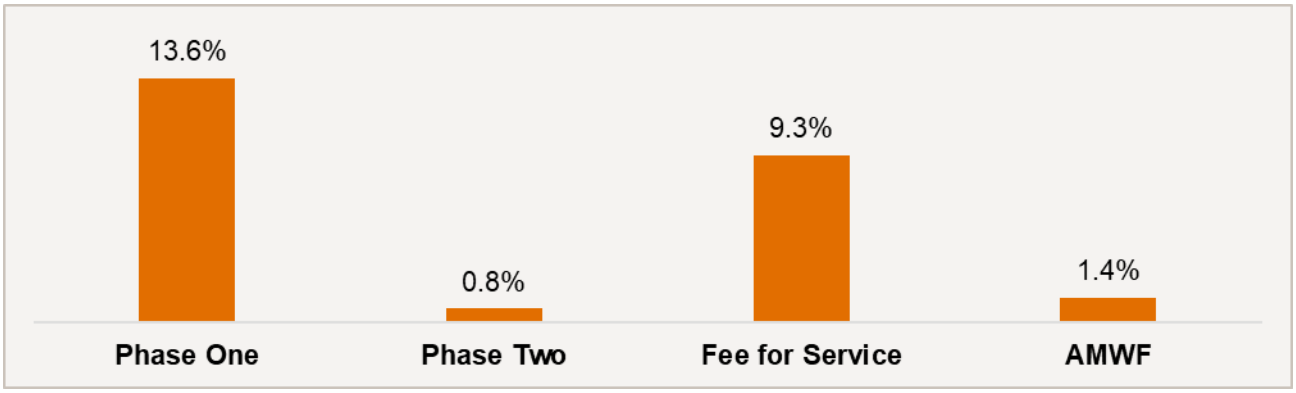

Figure 7: % committed budget awarded to EWL, by funding source

This issue has implications for DFAT's decisions about implementation arrangements for Phase 3. There were mixed and strong views among MTR respondents about the preferred delivery partner for Phase 3. The main options are to deliver AWP through EWL, a managing contractor, a separate legal AWP entity that is government-owned, or a hybrid model like the DFAT Health Security Initiative. For AWP staff wellbeing and retention, DFAT should make this decision promptly and provide clarity about any staff novation provisions (see **Recommendations 1 and 2**).

KEQ 3: How well is AWP addressing gender equality, disability, and social inclusion?

AWP developed a concise and high-quality GEDSI policy framework in 2017. It adopted a phased approach – starting with AWP systems and processes, before focusing on activity-level design and delivery. A solid review of GEDSI policy implementation occurred in 2019, leading to a renewed policy framework for 2020-23, a stronger focus on disability inclusion, and practical guidance for partners to inform proposal development. A further internal review of GEDSI progress is now underway and will be conducted by two ERP members, leading to a new GEDSI implementation plan for the remainder of Phase 2.

There have been major GEDSI improvements in AWP systems and processes. MTR respondents were unanimously optimistic about this. As part of its GEDSI strategy, AWP has taken actions across formal and informal domains and at systemic and individual levels (see Figure 8). This indicates a holistic approach that is more likely to be effective and sustained. Key strengths include:

- *allocation of dedicated GEDSI resources*, including a contracted GEDSI specialist to develop and support initial GEDSI policy implementation, three GEDSI specialist ERP members, and a GEDSI focal point staff member
- *formal rules and policies* including GEDSI policy, implementation plan, guidance for Australian partners on addressing GEDSI in their activity designs, 'do no harm' codes of conduct for staff and partner travel, GEDSI provisions in the HR manual and position descriptions, and essential selection criteria that communicate the importance of GEDSI considerations in AWP selection processes[16]
- *a management culture that reinforces formal commitments,* which several MTR respondents felt had become especially evident in the past year (one respondent observed that *"[the AWP team] put their heart and soul into it"*)

[16] Consequently, AWP's recent Partner Feedback Survey found that 93% of partners agreed or strongly agreed that they were aware of the impact of AWP's commitment to GEDSI on funded activities.

- *staff and Australian Partner training and awareness-raising,* repeated at least annually over the life of Phase 2

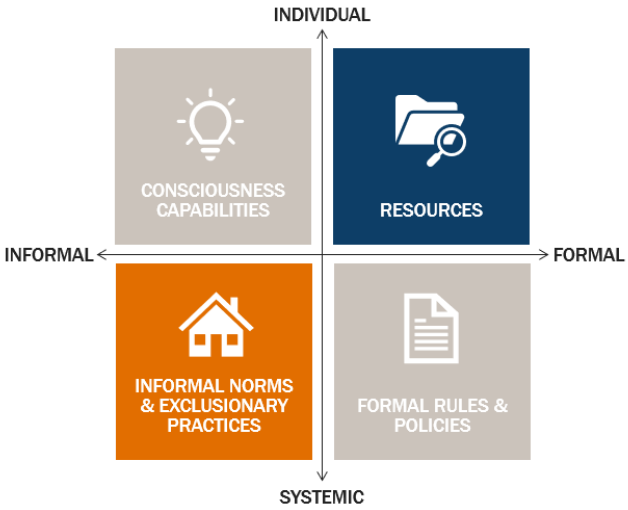

Figure 8: 'Gender at Work' framework for gender equality and organisational change

Source: https://genderatwork.org/analytical-framework/

In terms of AWP activity design and delivery, progress has been uneven. AWP's GESI review in 2019 highlighted that *"it is now critical for AWP to focus its GESI support on activity implementation."* A recent AWP webinar for Australian partners described a range of weaknesses in partner proposals, relating to GEDSI analysis, objective-setting, M&E, and resource allocation[17]. On a more positive note, AWP and ERP respondents to the MTR reported that a significant cohort of Australian partners are now consistently allocating greater resources and prominence to GEDSI in their proposals[18]. However, it isn't easy to judge whether better proposals are following through to GEDSI-responsive activity implementation. MTR interviews suggested that there is still a tendency to underutilise GEDSI specialists during implementation.

Weak M&E is the main reason why AWP has poor visibility of GEDSI in activity implementation. The 2019 GESI review highlighted that *"[activity] M&E systems are not capturing successes or learning to date, noting the most common response to 'how well do you think activities are addressing GESI' was 'I don't know'"*. This continues to be a challenge for AWP. AWP's reporting of activity-level GEDSI results are mainly at the activity and output level e.g., equal participation in workshops. AWP's current internal GEDSI review and performance system refresh are opportunities for AWP to identify practical responses (see **Recommendation 6**).

AWP also lacks flagship AWP activities that treat GEDSI as a principal objective[19]. AWP's shift to a more 'strategy-driven' approach would open opportunities to cultivate engagement around such activities – aided by ERP input and engagement with in-country GEDSI champions during strategy and concept development (see **Recommendation 3b**).

[17] *AWP Business: Procurement, consortia, and what makes a good proposal*, Webinar, 12 August 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDI6RavCMOY
[18] AWP's current GEDSI review will confirm this by analysing trends in ERP GEDSI scores.
[19] See OECD DAG gender equality marker – "Principal means that gender equality is the main objective of the project/programme and is fundamental is its design and expected results. The project/programme would not have been undertaken without this objective," https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/dac-gender-equality-marker.htm

As strategies for improving Australian partner GEDSI practice, AWP appears to have the balance right between incentives, standards, and training/coaching. This is not an easy balance to strike. One MTR respondent asked *"How much do you have to lead a horse to water? What is the boundary of AWP's responsibility?"* AWP's selection criteria, GEDSI guidance, and ERP feedback seem to have significantly impacted Australian partner practice, supported by annual foundation-level training that Partners value. The AWP GEDSI review in 2019 considered expanding AWP's GEDSI training to include more advanced topics, or developing easier-to-digest and more topic-specific guidance documents. The current GEDSI review should carefully weigh up these and other suggestions, paying attention to their opportunity costs for AWP's small team (e.g., less time monitoring activity implementation) (see **Recommendation 6**).

KEQ 4: How fit for purpose are AWP's M&E arrangements?

Monitoring and evaluation has been a persistent weakness for AWP in Phases 1 and 2. The AWPAC approved an M&E Plan in 2016, which AWP updated in 2018 based on informal feedback from the Office of Development Effectiveness and findings from AWP's first 'M&E Report'. The main weaknesses of the M&E system are: too many quantitative indicators, many of which are not meaningful nor collected; an over-reliance on self-reporting by Australian partners to understand activity progress and capture outcome data; limited capturing of counterpart perspectives on progress; no reasonable basis for judging whether overall AWP progress against intermediate or long-term outcomes is on track; and weak activity design logic, resulting in vague and overambitious activity objectives. The activity sample reviewed by this MTR confirmed these weaknesses – almost all lacked monitoring frameworks and credible outcome reporting.

Consequently, AWP performance reporting is not meeting DFAT information needs. All DFAT staff MTR respondents raised concerns about weak AWP results data (some DFAT Post staff respondents even reported limited or no access to activity implementation updates). This is reflected in DFAT's Investment Monitoring Reports reviewed by the MTR, which all struggled to tell a credible performance story.

AWP is working on a 'performance system refresh,' founded on a tiered approach. This includes a revised and simplified theory of change that represents three activity tiers, with progressively more ambitious expected outcomes. This is a good fit for AWP, because it provides a template for activity-level objective-setting which is more realistic than the current AWP theory of change; encourages a proportionate approach to allocation of M&E resources across AWP's large activity portfolio; and can easily accommodate changes in AWP thematic focus – whether between Phase 2 and 3, or between different AWP funding sources (e.g., core grant v AMWF). Importantly, it also recognises AWP's dual development and diplomatic objectives, and the need to monitor both. As noted throughout the MTR, this tiered approach has implications for a range of other AWP systems and processes, such as design and procurement.

The initial emphasis of this 'refresh' on defining and monitoring AWP effectiveness is sound. AWP is taking a staged approach to the refresh for meaningful engagement and buy-in from the AWP team, AWPAC, and DFAT. Appropriately, the initial focus is on better defining what success looks like for AWP and how to monitor it. The revised theory of change provides a strong foundation for this and the proposed 'annual KPI targets' will enable more robust judgments about the adequacy of AWP's overall progress. Initial thinking on enhanced data collection methods is also solid. Two vulnerabilities in the approach to keep an eye on are 1) the ability of busy DFAT staff to compile credible evidence of progress against diplomatic objectives and 2) the ability of Australian partners to set and monitor realistic targets for their activities. More work is also needed to integrate a focus on GEDSI. AWP can build other

important elements of a quality MEL system (beyond monitoring effectiveness) into the performance system refresh over time (see **Recommendation 7**).

KEQ 5: To what extent is AWP responsive to Australia's priorities?

Coordination with DFAT programs

AWP linkages with Water for Women are strong and could deepen further. The focus has been mainly on public diplomacy and communications, for example on World Water Day. Given AWP may strengthen its WASH engagement in the Pacific, several respondents saw opportunities to deepen these linkages. AWP is already working with a Water for Women partner (WaterAid) on integrated WASH/WRM pilots in Cambodia and Timor-Leste. Future WASH-related activities may open opportunities to support sharing of good GEDSI practice by Australian NGOs with AWP partners (see **Recommendation 3i**).

Levels of coordination with DFAT Posts are mixed. DFAT and AWP were very positive about communication and coordination between AWP and DFAT Mekong Regional Post, which will become more critical as new regional investments come online. Coordination benefits from a history of strong DFAT water engagement in the region, a well-resourced Post, and dedicated Mekong Program funding to AWP that a DFAT-AWP Facility Coordination Group oversees. India Post has also established a regular 'Team Australia' coordination meeting relating to water engagement in which AWP's regional coordinator plays a key role. Other Post staff respondents indicated lower levels of coordination. Efforts are underway to improve coordination between AWP and Cambodia Post. In Indonesia, there seems an appetite for more formalised coordination, beyond current ad hoc requests for endorsements of activity concepts. This may create opportunities for AWP to enhance large DFAT investments like the Indonesia Australia Infrastructure Partnership (KIAT). Several respondents highlighted weak AWP coordination with DFAT Posts in the Pacific and attributed this to the fragmented nature of DFAT and Pacific Island Country water portfolios. AWP reports positive relationships with the Office of the Pacific (DFAT Canberra), Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific and Australia Pacific Climate Partnership and plans to engage an AWP Pacific Coordinator to further strengthen engagement (see **Recommendation 3i**).

Several respondents noted apparent misalignment between AWP and South Asia Water Security Initiative (SAWASI). There were contrary views about the alignment of each investment to Government of India priorities, although their areas of focus appear complementary (urban water v basin planning, with different counterpart ministries). Some Australian Partners questioned why SAWASI had procured its own short-term technical assistance panel rather than work through AWP. Coordination between Canberra- and Post-managed investments is a perennial issue for DFAT and merits consideration in the Phase 3 design (see **Recommendation 3i**).

One Australian university partner shared a novel example of leveraging Australia Awards opportunities to enhance its AWP-funded activity. This included contracting current or alumni Australia Awards students for activity implementation (e.g., remote training delivery in Bahasa) and providing English training and other support to help staff from counterpart institutions access Australia Awards Scholarships (see **Recommendation 3i**). There may be opportunities for DFAT to scale AWP linkages to DFAT's other global investments in Phase 3, although cost-effectiveness will need to be an important consideration, given likely transaction costs involved.

Alignment to DFAT policies

AWP has a track record of proactively aligning to emerging DFAT policy directions. Key AWP achievements in this area are its:

- *Comprehensive gender equality strategy* since 2017 and a stronger focus on disability inclusion since 2019 – both policy priorities for DFAT but less familiar to most Australian partners (see *KEQ 3*).
- *Establishment of a larger Pacific portfolio*, in line with DFAT's Pacific Step Up. This has included a feasibility study of AWP entry points in the Pacific, an ongoing and large investment in PWWA, a new partnership with the Secretariat for the Pacific Community, and several other smaller responsive activities, for example linked to AIFFP. This agenda is receiving renewed focus under the current CEO.
- *Prompt and multi-faceted COVID-19 response*. This included analysis of COVID-19 water security risks and responses in the Indo-Pacific (see Annex 1), piloting the Australian Telewater Network to support water utilities in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and collaborating on SARS-CoV-2 environmental surveillance in sewage and water environments. It also promptly changed its operational processes to reflect travel restrictions by quarantining a COVID-19 Response fund to respond to relevant requests for support; and shifting to remote modes of delivering services to Australian Partners, among others.
- *Early and ongoing efforts to align to DFAT climate change policy directions*. This has included integrating climate change and water security action into a range of AWP activities e.g., village-level water security plans through MARVI; commissioning a comprehensive review of climate change impacts on water security in the Indo Pacific, and conducting associated webinars for Australian partners. As a dynamic policy area for DFAT, this will likely be a much stronger AWP focus during Phase 3 (see **Recommendation 3b**).

Support to water diplomacy

AWP is generally DFAT's first port of call for policy and technical advice to support water diplomacy in Indo-Pacific. This appears equally true for Department of Agriculture Water and the Environment, at least in its MoU countries of India and Indonesia. Australian Government respondents noted that AWP activities can help to build trust and openness for bilateral dialogue on more complicated topics like agricultural trade and market access. In support of Australia's international development, diplomatic, and trade agendas in water, AWP has markedly improved the visibility of Australia's water expertise and engagement within partner countries and at global policy forums. Its branding and communications work is professional and highly regarded. A few Australian Government MTR respondents suggested that AWP's positioning as a development program limits its potential as a "shopfront" for Australia's global water diplomacy. Ultimately, this is a policy decision for DFAT in the Phase 3 design (see **Recommendation 1a**).

There were differing views on the degree of tension for AWP between development and diplomatic drivers in ODA countries. Some respondents tended to equate diplomatic responsiveness with small-scale responses to diffuse requests. Others believed that diplomatic capital is best accrued through consistent engagements that deliver long-term results. Ultimately, AWP's development and diplomatic drivers both require a balance between reactive/short-term and proactive/long-term

engagements. The Phase 3 design should provide more precise direction on what this balance should look like, framed by AWP's new tiered theory of change (see **Recommendation 1a and 3e**).

On the other hand, DFAT and AWP respondents generally agreed that commercial opportunities for Australian partners are a side-benefit not an objective of AWP. One respondent felt this contrasted the early stages of Phase 1, during which there was a tendency to see AWP as an 'aid for trade' investment. However, three multilateral development partner respondents described examples of Australian Partners overtly approaching AWP-funded engagements as business development opportunities. These were isolated instances but created challenges for AWP's multilateral partners and are reputational risks for AWP (see **Recommendation 1a**).

Recommendations

AWP is entering a dynamic period of transition that will need careful management. Significant changes are already underway, framed by the performance system refresh; and a recent AWPAC paper proposing further reform under the banner of a more 'strategy-driven approach'. AWP has recently completed or commissioned a range of internal reviews[20] and a strategic visioning process to inform future directions. Phase 2 ends in June 2023, and DFAT aims to decide whether to commence the design of AWP Phase 3 by December 2021[21].

DFAT's decision about the design pathway for Phase 3 is a critical next step (see **Recommendation 1b**). The design approach will need to strike the right balance between AWP ownership, DFAT strategic direction, and external contestability. It will also need to define clear DFAT and AWP responsibilities and timeframes for conducting and supporting the design process. In turn, the Phase 3 design process will need to allocate clear responsibilities for a strategic transition during the remainder of Phase 2.

In this context, the MTR makes seven recommendations. Recommendations 1-2 relate to DFAT decisions about the design and procurement of Phase 3. Recommendation 3 identifies key design issues for Phase 3, noting that responsibilities for this recommendation will depend on DFAT's design pathway decision. Recommendation 4 recognises AWP's Phase 2 transition responsibilities to align with the Phase 3 design decisions. Lastly, Recommendations 5-7 relate to AWP actions that are independent of Phase 3 design decisions.

Phase 3 design

1. **DFAT prepares an investment concept for Phase 3** that:
    a. clarifies the desired balance between AWP's development, diplomatic, and trade drivers; and explores implications for AWP funding and structure; geographical and thematic scope, balance between proactive/long-term and reactive/short-term activities, etc.
    b. defines the Phase 3 design pathway. Given the atypical features of this design process, DFAT should consider its Adaptive Design and Procurement Pathway (ADAPT).[22] Competitive selection of AWP's delivery partner/s will be important. DFAT should aim to clarify the implications of the design pathway for AWP staff contracts by March 2022.
2. **DFAT balances the risk of perceived conflict of interest against other considerations** when selecting the implementing partner for Phase 3. DFAT should consider requiring that the Phase 3 implementing partner cannot bid for AWP activities.
3. **Phase 3 design process updates the following aspects of AWP**, and propose transition strategies for the remainder of Phase 2:
    a. 'Demand-led' operational model
    b. Thematic and geographic focus (including climate change)
    c. Approach to strategic portfolio management in priority geographies
    d. Partnership strategy, including partnership management processes for international 'counterparts' and 'allies'; mechanisms for engaging Australian state and commonwealth

[20] These cover GEDSI, partnerships, thinking and working politically in the Pacific, water stewardship,
[21] MTR recommendations assume that DFAT will decide to commence design of a Phase 3.
[22] These are design update, design-extension, concept to tender, cocreation with the private sector, or design-implement.

government agencies, and the balance of AWP staff effort between Australian and international partners

e. Design and procurement processes, including innovations to enhance engagements with multilateral development partners e.g., rapid-response STA panel contracts; and more efficient, programmatic, and partnership-based procurement methods for larger activities.
f. Degree to which AWP procurements are restricted to Australian tenderers
g. Localisation strategies for both AWP functions and activity delivery
h. ERP's remit, including ways to enhance its influence on AWP activity performance and quality, and implications for its skill base
i. Australian Development Program linkages and coordination mechanisms, including with DFAT's water portfolio, DFAT Posts, and other global investments like Australia Awards or the Australian Volunteers Program (where cost-effective).
j. Implications of above for AWP personnel resourcing (in Phases 2 and 3).

Phase 2 implementation

4. **AWP implements transition strategies defined in the Phase 3 design process** e.g., trialling innovations in AWP systems and processes for scale out in Phase 3, or conducting a collaborative updating and mapping of Australian water sector capacities in line with agreed Phase 3 thematic priorities (see recommendation 3)

5. **AWP proposes further efficiencies in approval processes** for activity concepts/ToRs and procurement outcomes, for consideration by AWPAC, DFAT, and/or EWL Board.

6. **AWP strengthens efforts to improve GEDSI-responsive activity implementation**. As part of the current GEDSI review, AWP should commission primary data collection on GEDSI processes and results of a sample of ongoing or complete AWP activities, preferably in a collaborative way with Australian partners. Careful consideration should be given in the updated GEDSI implementation plan to the most cost-effective mix of strategies for making activity implementation more GEDSI-responsive.

7. **AWP improves alignment to DFAT's M&E Standards**,[23] in a staged manner as part of the performance system refresh process. This should include a focus on 1) *monitoring why* – not just whether – results are (or are not) being achieved; 2) *monitoring AWP's implementation approach* e.g., what difference is AWP's renewed 'strategy-driven' approach making to the strategic focus (and responsiveness) of its activity portfolio? How well is AWP enhancing and leveraging multilateral partner investments? 3) *monitoring AWP's relevance* e.g., linkages and coordination with DFAT's broader water portfolio; and 4) *learning and adaptation processes* that help to 'close the loop' between AWP performance information and decision-making e.g., six-monthly 'reflect and refocus' workshops.

[23] See DFAT Standard 2 Investment Monitoring and Evaluation Systems, especially criteria 2.9 and 2.17, https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/monitoring-evaluation-standards.pdf

Annex 1: Activity Summaries

The MTR conducted six activity reviews. Based on the sampling method described in Annex 4, the table below provides more information on each activity. A narrative summary of each activity is then provided below.

Activity	Country/ Region	Funding Source	Budget	Period	Impact Pathway	Multilat partner	Program cluster
Pacific Water and Wastewater Association Funding Support 2019 - 2022	Pacific	Phase 2	$1.25m	2019-22	Capacity Building	N/A	No
Strategic Operating Plan for NWIC	India	Phase 2	$0.1m	2019	Knowledge Sharing	N/A	No
Biodiversity and irrigation - FAO	Indonesia	Phase 2	$0.5m	2019-22	Capacity Building	FAO	Yes
DWIR hydraulic modelling training	Myanmar	Phase 2	0.6m	2019-20	Capacity Building	N/A	No
Laos Dam safety review	Laos	AMWF	$0.2m	2019-20	Tools Adoption	Multi-donor	No
Indo Pacific COVID 19 Assessment	Indo-Pacific	Phase 2	$0.1m	2020-21	Knowledge Sharing	N/A	No

1. Laos Dam Safety Review

Partners involved:

- **AWP Australian Partners**: Entura
- **In-Country Partners:** LAO PDR Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM), LAO PDR Department of Energy Management (DEM)
- **International Partners:** DFAT Greater Mekong Water Resources Program, AECOM-NZ, Electricite de France, United States Army Corps and Kunming Engineering Power China

Situation the Activity was responding to

Following the Xepian-Xenamoy Hydropower Project dam failure in July 2018, which led to widespread flooding across the country, the Government of Laos called for a suspension of new hydropower development and renewed inspection of all existing hydropower facilities. A Special Committee was also established, led by the Lao Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM), to review and monitor water management and hydropower development nationally. All hydropower projects above 15 MW were required to undertake Emergency Dam Safety Inspections (EDSI) of their facilities. To facilitate the process, MEM requested the support of International Advisors (IAs) and a Dam Safety Specialist in

reviewing the EDSI reports and assist with safety inspections; and provide recommendations for remedial works and improvements to safety standards.

In response to this request, Australia provided the services of a Dam Safety Specialist to assist the GoL and MEM in undertaking dam safety assessments. This assistance was provided via the AWP under the Australia-Mekong Water Facility, with a specialist from Australian partner, Entura, joining the team of IAs.

Scope of Activity

The Lao Dam Safety Review activity ran from 2019 – 2020, and the team of IAs completed dam safety assessments for 10 hydropower schemes[24]. These include the Nam Ou cascade of dams (Nam Ou 1, Nam Ou 2, Nam Ou 3, Nam Ou 4, Nam Ou 5, Nam Ou 6, and Nam Ou 7), the Nam Ngum 1, Nam Theun 1 and Xe Kaman 3. Site inspections were also carried out by the IAs for nine out of the 10 schemes, with flooding issues preventing the team from undertaking a site inspection of Xe Kaman[25]. In addition to the review of the EDSI reports, the Dam Safety Specialist from Entura undertook an inspection of the Xepian-Xenamoy Hydropower Project dam[26], dam quality and safety checks for all schemes under the activity in line with local and international standards, and chaired the IA review panel, with quality assurance and compilation of IA reports[27]. Detailed reports were provided for each scheme with findings and recommendations presented to the MEM and DEM.

These assessment reports provide the basis for scheme owners to implement improvements to safety standards in their facilities. The GoL are also considering plans for a Phase 2 to enable the adoption of recommendations[28].

Key achievements

- **Prompt response from AWP**: In the immediate aftermath of the dam break incident, the DFAT Vientiane Post requested AWP's assistance to support the GoL[29]. The AWP was able to swiftly respond with a concept for support, providing the services of a Dam Safety Specialist from Australian partner, Entura, and funding for the role.
- **Building local awareness of international practice**: The activity has enabled local stakeholders from MEM and DEM to gain exposure to international good practice concerning dam safety and engineering, as well as governance arrangements for dam safety management.

Key challenges and lessons

- **Delays in the delivery of Australian assistance**: While the AWP was able to effectively respond to the immediate request for support from the DFAT Vientiane Post and the GoL, there were delays in Australian assistance during the delivery of the activity, mainly around the submission of the draft

[24] Annual Report (2020)
[25] Activity Completion Report (2021)
[26] Activity Completion Report (2021)
[27] Activity Plan (2019)
[28] AWP Post-Contract Review (2021)
[29] Interviews (2021)

reports. As the Laos Dam Review involved several international development partners, including the World Bank, this delay was recognised to have had a negative impact on Australia's reputation[30].

- **Limitations of the Synthesis Report**: The final Synthesis Report was noted to be of limited value to scheme owners as a tool for risk management and dam safety planning. While raw scores were assigned to the different schemes, the report did not emphasise or identify critical or high-risk issues which may have implications on decisions concerning future dam safety measures[31].

- **Coordination and project management**: There were issues with coordination and project management across the activity due to the lack of clarity in terms of roles, responsibilities, and communication lines. For example:

    - Draft documents were shared with Lao counterparts where they were not required and there was confusion around which agency was the main GoL focal point for the review. While AWP managed the submission of reports on behalf of Entura, there was a need for a clear project management structure at the Australian partner level to manage operational aspects and communication with other counterparts[32].

    - The activity was initially managed by a staff member from the DEM, who was able to effectively work with scheme owners to organise site visits and documentation and facilitate the assessment process. However, with the departure of the DEM staff member, project management was handed over to the international partner – AECOM. This change in project management from a local partner to an international one was reported to have had a negative impact on the quality of engagement and the management of scheme owner inputs[33].

    - There were four review teams with different IAs who were involved in diverse capacities throughout the review. The lack of a coordinated approach was seen to have had a negative impact on the quality of reporting, with IAs having different understandings of the brief and level of assessment required, as well as the style of reporting[34]. It was recognised that a collaborative approach would have been more appropriate for the delivery of the activity, with an IA forum to share issues and solutions[35].

- **Capacity development and knowledge exchange**: Although local capacity development was identified as a key priority by DEM, there were limited opportunities for engagement with local stakeholders, impacting on IAs' ability to effectively share their skills and knowledge. Where there were interactions with local stakeholders, for example – local engineers who participated in the site inspections, it was reported that they demonstrated a relative lack of engagement with the more technical aspects of the process[36].

- **Sustainability**: Entura has not received formal feedback from MEM / DEM since the submission of the review report, and presentation of findings and recommendations. As such, there is no clear insight into whether Government agencies are actioning the recommendations outlined in the report. The Activity Completion Report attributes this to the role of DEM acting as a facilitator between IAs and scheme owners rather than an agency with ownership over implementation. The report also

[30] AWP Post-Contract Review (2021)
[31] AWP Activity Completion Report (2021)
[32] AWP Post-Contract Review (2021)
[33] AWP Activity Completion Report (2021)
[34] AWP Activity Completion Report (2021)
[35] AWP Post-Contract Review (2021)
[36] AWP Activity Completion Report (2021)

highlights that the adoption of recommendations may also be impeded by the absence of a government regulatory environment[37].

2. Myanmar DWIR 2019 Training: Hydraulics, Sediment Transport and Modelling

Partners involved:

- **AWP Australian Partner:** University of New South Wales (UNSW)
- **In-Country Partner:** Directorate for Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems (DWIR), Myanmar

Situation the activity was responding to

The Ayeyarwady River has historically been the main transport artery for the countries connecting the population with agricultural and industry centres. Increasingly issues of sedimentation and riverbank erosion have deteriorated the navigability of the water, caused by significant deforestation in the upstream catchments, as well as the results of intensified wet season rainfall. The Directorate for Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems (DWIR) identified 46 navigation constraint points along the river, 13 of which are identified as critical[38].

Insufficient understanding of the hydrodynamics of the river system impacts effective management measures to ensure safe and efficient river transport. DWIR have identified a need to build in-house hydraulic modelling capacity of their staff engineers to help optimise investments in management, ensuring smart investments where resources are limited. DWIR are in the process of establishing a modelling division which will have responsibility to undertake hydraulic modelling of channel conditions to assess the effectiveness of management interventions[39].

Scope of the activity

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed in 2015 between Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Australian Government to facilitate long-term cooperation between the two countries in Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM); specifically, to ensure development of Myanmar's river basins are managed in accordance with international best practice[40].

Part of this MOU includes building the capacity of DWIR engineers to set up, calibrate and run hydraulic models of the Ayeyarwady River, as well as to deepen the theoretical understanding of DWIR engineers in river hydraulics, design of hydraulic structures and options for green infrastructure measures to maintain water levels and channel stability. Previously, UNSW had introduced DWIR engineers to background theory of river hydraulics in 2016, with follow up research in 2017 to better understand the Ayeyarwady River's physical riverine process to focus training onto the most important issues[41].

[37] Activity Completion Report (2021)
[38] Project proposal (2019)
[39] Project proposal (2019)
[40] Project proposal (2019)
[41] Completion report (2020)

Through AWP, UNSW was contracted to provide this support through in-house training at the DWIR Yangon offices in 2019.

Key achievements

- **Training delivered:** The training of 14 DWIR engineers (five men and nine women) through theory, tutorials and applied modelling sessions on the topics of: hydraulic fundamentals; open channel flow; sediment transport; numerical methods; computational hydraulics; and modelling principles[42]. This training was over the duration of a nine-day intensive. In the completion report (2020), it is noted that the knowledge and skills from the training can be directly applied to investigating flows, flow depths, navigability and bank erosion of the Ayeyarwady River. These skills are also expected to assist DWIR engineers in designing hydrological sampling programs and management of the river. Participants noted[43] that they intended to continue learning beyond the training, particularly for using software such as HEC-RAS and HEC-HMS.

Key challenges and lessons

- **Limited data on outcomes of training:** It is unclear if the skills taught throughout the training have been applied, as well as understanding the improvements on the Ayeyarwady River itself since the training. Without proper M&E information (supported by a theory of change), it is difficult to determine if the expected outcomes of this activity have been progressed.
- **Short time for capacity building:** The completion report (2020) noted that the training over a short period may be intense for the attendees. Feedback from participants[44] noted that there was insufficient time for some activities (such as more time for modelling).

3. Indo Pacific COVID-19 Water Security Vulnerability Assessment

Partners involved:

- **AWP Australian Partner:** International WaterCentre, Griffith University

Situation the activity was responding to

COVID-19 deepened varying levels of existing water insecurity in the Indo-Pacific by exacerbating already stressed water sectors, for water supply and sanitation, water for cities, food security, water sharing and allocation, or water for domestic and subsistence needs[45].

[42] Completion report (2020)
[43] Training report (2019)
[44] Training report (2019)
[45] AWP Newsletter (2020), proposal (2020)

Scope of the activity

The AWP funded the International WaterCentre and Griffith University to develop an evidence-based analytical framework and to undertake a rapid assessment of vulnerability to respond to COVID-19 risks from the immediate to long term and index countries in the Indo Pacific[46].

The project sought to assess vulnerability to COVID-19 outbreak for countries in the Indo Pacific region through the development of a tool to help DFAT prioritise and target the funding of their COVID-19 responses. The project built upon the Asian Water Development Outlook (AWDO 2020) approach, indices and datasets in building a COVID-19 assessment methodology to apply across the Indo-Pacific. Specially, public health dimensions of the COVID-19 pandemic and relevant indicators will be incorporated[47].

Strengths and achievements

- **Consultative process**: The project ensured a high level of engagement through consultations and workshops. This included engagement with the World Bank and ADB, as well as AWDO and the Queensland Department of Health to capitalise on existing data sets and information. The workshops were seen to be highly useful to gain feedback as well as buy-in from various stakeholders to use the information moving forward.
- **Informative output:** The tool that was produced is gaining a lot of interest nationally, due to its accessible format using digital tools. Rather than a large document, this tool is using Microsoft PowerBI and geomapping software to increase interactivity depending on location or thematic area that might want to be explored. The AWDO will continue to use this tool for future annual reporting, as well as gaining further interest from ADB and World Bank in the usefulness this information provides.
- **Flexibility to adapt to scope:** Initially the project was seen to be a scoping study, though over time was developed to include country summaries (including a subnational analysis case study for Timor Leste). AWP was able to respond in changes to the scope, and the International WaterCentre and Griffith University were also able to adapt to any changes for their study[48].

Challenges and lessons

- **Utilisation of information:** At this stage, it is unclear how much of this information was used or will be useful for its intended purpose of assisting with DFAT decision making. It is noted that the ADB and World Bank are interested in this information moving forward, but with other tools and information now available, it is unclear how useful this tool will be in the longer term.

[46] AWP Newsletter (2020), proposal (2020)
[47] AWP Newsletter (2020), proposal (2020)
[48] Interviews, 2021

4. Capacity Development Assistance to the PWWA – Phase II

Partners involved:

- **AWP Australian Partner**: Hunter H2O
- **In-Country Partner**: Pacific Water and Wastewater Association (NGO, consisting of 30 water and sewerage utilities from 21 Pacific Countries. It is the primary body bringing Pacific water utility organisations together to collaborate, exchange knowledge and work collectively).

Situation the Activity was responding to

The PWWA is a consortium of water and wastewater utility organisations across the Pacific. Their aim is to work together in sustainable and durable partnerships to address issues affecting the region's water and wastewater sector. This is done through sharing best practices on the effective and efficient management of water resources and infrastructure[49].

AWP has been providing governance assistance to PWWA and its members since an initial stakeholder workshop in December 2016. Throughout Phase I, AWP assisted PWWA's development and reforms to move from a volunteer-based organisation to a professional body focussed on developing the capacity of its members and optimising the organisation's performance through capacity building activities, including implementing a five-year Strategic Plan. AWP's support included meeting the costs of a permanent Secretariat for the Association.

Scope of Activity

Phase II (2019-2022) involves a new and large-scale capacity development program for PWWA. This includes[50]:

- Pacific Young Water Professional Program (PYWP) - July – Sept annually: A flagship PWWA program building capacities of young water professionals by engaging in training, mentoring, sector discussions and annual PWWA conference activities
- PWWA Secretariat - monthly: Core funding for the PWWA Secretariat operational costs. This is a scaled version of what was provided as part of Phase I and will also support PWWA in moving towards a more sustainable funding model that is not reliant on one major donor and would ensure a sustainable allocation of budget from programming and the Secretariat.
- Board Governance and Financial Training - March and Nov annually: Strengthening capacities of utility CEOs and Board members on governance and financial management to promote sound and sustainable utilities in the Pacific. Feedback from the PWWA CEO and selected Board members suggested that this money should be reallocated to the PYWP and Secretariat support (activities above) in 2019 and was therefore discontinued[51].
- Pacific COVID-19 Response Network (PacCRN): Provision of effective and increased access to technical advice, knowledge and tools for Pacific Utility Members of PWWA that will assist in the preparedness, response and recovery from COVID-19. Funds to this activity were secured through reallocation of expenditure within AWP 2019-2020 Funding Support activity

[49] Expressions of interest (2019)
[50] Proposal and progress reports (2019)
[51] Annual report (September 2020), interviews (2021)

Strengths and achievements

Key achievements have been:

- **Enabling PWWA to withstand COVID-19 impacts** on PWWA revenue due to the inability to conduct its in-person annual conference.
- **Establishing strong relationships**[52]: Strong relationships have been established between Hunter H2O and PWWA. There is a high level of trust and respect between these organisations, with their relationship pre-dating the commencement of AWP support.
- **AWP seen to be collaborative and flexible**[53]: AWP has been adaptive and flexible in relation to changes in scope (such as the prioritisation of the YWP).
- **Building capacities of future leaders through PYWP**[54]: This program provides YWPs with networking, exposure, and recognition at the ministerial level for them to provide insights into broad topics of discussion throughout the PWWA conference. The Program is focused on a variety of issues for a wide breadth of people involved in the water industry such as water resource engineers, hydro geologists, process engineers and accountants. It was noted in the most recent progress report that the interactions of participants in the most recent cohort (March 2021) have been of high quality, being able to share learnings and contribute to discussions[55] - although the number of participants is low and remote delivery of the program has been challenging.

Challenges and lessons

- **Scope and design**[56]. The evaluation of Phase I brought up challenges around how ambitious the design of the program was, as well as the challenges around the design of program activities to garner expected results. It seems that some of these challenges have carried over into Phase II. The theory of change for this activity continues to be quite ambitious (i.e., training and mentoring leading to behaviour change for Pacific Utility organisations and organisational transformation). Additionally, the governance training continued to be for PWWA board members when it was recommended in the evaluation to train the board members of the various Pacific Utility organisation boards.
- **Sustainability**[57]: The sustainability of PWWA hinges upon the strength of the Secretariat, which is currently dependent on AWP core funding for operations and salaries, as many Pacific utility organisations struggle to pay the membership fees. The pathway toward financial sustainability for PWWA and the members (Pacific Utility organisations) is not yet clear.
- **M&E**[58]: M&E has not been discussed as part of the program with Hunter H2O or PWWA. Hunter H2O provides reports to AWP regularly (previously quarterly, now 6-monthly) using AWP's reporting framework. The reports include activities, not just the budget, though does not focus on outcomes, rather just outputs. It is difficult to determine the effectiveness of the program through this reporting format. At this stage there has not been any requests from AWP to establish an M&E Framework or any other evaluative activities. For example, the evaluation (2019) notes that it is not clear if the PYWP has resulted in outcome-related changes for participants (such as changes in knowledge, skills and behaviours). By using a theory-based M&E process, it would be easier to articulate the

[52] Interviews (2021)
[53] Interviews (2021)
[54] Interviews (2021)
[55] Progress report (2021)
[56] Evaluation (2019) and proposal (2019)
[57] Interviews (2021), progress reports (2020) and evaluation (2019)
[58] Interviews (2021), progress reports (2020) and evaluation (2019)

narrative of change of this initiative (scoping point above), as well as a process to report on progress towards outcomes.

- **COVID-19**[59]: The impact of COVID-19 travel restrictions has impacted the delivery of program activities. There has been no face-to-face PYWP conferences in two years due to travel restrictions, with the implementation of virtual training commencing in 2021. However, there has not been as much engagement in online relative to face-to-face training due to the costs associated with internet and technology access, as well as being a standalone activity, rather than running parallel to the Pacific Water Conference.

5. Strategic Operating Plan for the National Water Informatics Centre, India (2019-2024)

Partners involved:

- **AWP Australian Partner:** Global Change Advisory (and Bureau of Meteorology)
- **In-Country Partner:** National Water Informatics Centre, India

Situation the Activity was responding to

Due to increases in population growth, economic development and climate change, effective water resource management in India is increasingly under pressure. Reliable and up-to-date water data and information is quite fragmented and incomplete, making it difficult for policy makers to use evidence-based decisions for policy making[60]. The Government of India has established the National Water Informatics Centre (NWIC) through the World Bank National Hydrology Project (NHP) which inherited several legacy water information systems and others that were under development[61].

Scope of the activity

Global Change Advisory was contracted under AWP to provide technical advice on various water information systems that they were developing, of which the focus turned to preparing a Strategic Operating Plan (SOP) to guide the operation of the NWIC[62]. The SOP sets out the NWIC's focus areas for the first five years of its operation (2019-2024) and a vision for its long-term future to build a reliable Water Information System and develop water information services in high priority areas[63]. The scope of Global Change Advisory's work was to:

- Understand the water policy reform context in India, including assessing the state of India's water information assets and institutional arrangements for hosting and sharing water information.
- Engaging with relevant decision makers within central government, including sharing knowledge of Australia's water information reforms, with relevant senior officials and Ministers of the Indian central government.

[59] Interviews (2021) and progress reports (2020)
[60] SOP (2020)
[61] Completion report (2021)
[62] Completion report (2021)
[63] SOP (2020)

- Conceptualise and prepare the SOP for NWIC.

Strengths and achievements

- **Engaging relevant stakeholders**: Global Change Advisory engaged relevant stakeholders across India to be involved in this process. For example, the two-day workshop in December 2018 involved central and state government officials, research personnel and private sector contractors. This event was seen to be helpful in strategically positioning the NWIC and road-testing various facets of the SOP prior to launch. In addition, considerable effort was made to build consensus around the direction of the NWIC by engaging the Ministry of Water Resources, the Central Water Commission, the Central Groundwater Board, the World Bank and the Technical Management Consultants appointed to the NHP by the Indian government. The exchanges with various water ministers were seen to be the most beneficial as it helped to highlight systemic problems and to articulate plausible management and policy solutions[64], which led to the Minister advocating for the approaches Global Change Advisory was recommending.

- **Fit-for-purpose SOP co-developed:** Throughout the course of the project, the project team worked with the NWIC Director to prepare a fit for purpose SOP for the NWIC. This involved the exchange of many versions of the SOP.

- **Clarification of NWIC's role:** Through the development of the SOP, the NWIC have been able to clarify and articulate a more strategic view of their role and function within the Indian government. Recent improvements to the India Water Resources Information System (WRIS) (notably their new Surface Water Data Online) have been modelled partly on BoM products, following advice we provided concerning user-centric design.

Challenges and lessons

- **Slow implementation:** Progress was slow for the long periods between in-country visits by Global Change Advisory (five times over a three-year period), despite regular meetings and consultations via videoconference. It was noted by the Global Change Advisory that operating in country was effective, but operating remotely was quite frustrating and ineffective. Potential reasons included conflicting priorities for counterparts, hierarchical ways of working delaying progress and decision making, limited in-country resources and the right knowledge to undertake this work. In addition, due to COVID-19, the webinar activity to socialise the SOP with stakeholders was abandoned as it was seen to be too complicated to implement[65].

- **M&E**: There was no M&E Framework for this activity, which led to informal reporting on activities, rather than formal reporting on outcomes. Though the outcomes are more long-term than the activity itself, it would have been helpful to understand instances of change, or what changes the SOP had intended to great to measure outcomes over time.

- **GEDSI[66]**: GEDSI-related outcomes and activities were not considered in project documentation.

[64] Completion report (2021)
[65] Completion report (2021), interviews (2021)
[66] Completion report (2021)

6. Irrigation Modernisation and Biodiversity in South-East Asia

Partners involved:

- **AWP Australian Partner:** Charles Sturt University (CSU)
- **Multilateral Partner**: Food and Agriculture Organisation
- **In-Country Partner:** National Water Informatics Centre, India

Situation the Activity was responding to

Asia contains 70% of the world's irrigated area, largely developed to enhance rice productivity. In Southeast Asia, fish are people's main animal-source protein. Irrigation infrastructure was designed for agricultural crops such as rice but has significant positive and negative impacts on water resources and the aquatic ecosystems and fisheries that depend on them. The World Wildlife Fund's (WWF) Living Planet Index shows that the decline in freshwater species is closely correlated with the expansion of irrigation.

This activity responds to the need to avoid and reduce such negative impacts in new or rehabilitated irrigation schemes. Technical solutions include *"the design and operation of delivery and storage infrastructure in ways that minimize harm and maximize biodiversity benefits including via environmental flows, increased connectivity and the construction or improvement of critical habitat and refuge areas within and around irrigated systems."* These solutions need underpinning by policy and regulatory change.[67]

Scope of the activity

CSU aims to help modernise irrigated agriculture in Indonesia to protect and restore aquatic biodiversity and ecosystem services. As part of the FAO *Next Generation Irrigation and Water Management for the Asia-Pacific Program*, this activity aims to contribute to ending hunger and malnutrition.[68] The activity builds on and runs parallel to related CSU research funded by ACIAR.

The activity's objectives were to:

- develop technical guidelines for the design and operation of irrigation infrastructure to sustain freshwater fisheries productivity and conserve aquatic biodiversity
- build institutional and policy-level awareness in Myanmar and Indonesia of processes and benefits of integrating the design of irrigation infrastructure with enhancement of natural resource productivity and biodiversity
- disseminate processes and build capacity at national and regional levels to manage irrigation infrastructure for improved productivity of irrigated agriculture and living aquatic resources.

[67] Activity Proposal, p4
[68] AWP Annual Report 2020-21, p16

Myanmar activities have been discontinued due to the coup, with funds redirected to scale out the Indonesia component in West Java. [69]

Strengths and achievements

- **Initial results**: CSU commenced basic training for nine partner participants on fish-friendly irrigation design. It also conducted social surveys to document the importance of fish to local people and the impact that the Perjaya Irrigation Dam has had on fisheries in the Komering River in Indonesia, with results informing a guideline to integrate biodiversity into future irrigation investments. [70]
- **Cross-fertilisation of GEDSI knowledge**: CSU report significant improvements in their GEDSI knowledge and practice within this activity, due to the opportunity to discuss and learn from the GEDSI specialist on another component of the NextGen Program (implemented by the Institute for Sustainable Futures). FAO has facilitated this cross-fertilisation of knowledge.[71]
- **AWP flexibility:** CSU and FAO report a flexible approach to contract management by AWP, enabling adaptation triggered by COVID-19 impacts, the Myanmar coup, and other unanticipated developments. [72]
- **Relationships:** CSU have strong relationships with counterparts, supported by extensive experience working cross-culturally in low resource settings. [73]

Challenges and lessons

- **Short timeframe:** CSU's two-year contract makes it difficult to convey longer term commitment to counterparts.
- **M&E and Reporting**: Activity reporting is quite detailed and dense. There also is not an overarching M&E framework for the NextGen Program. [74]

[69] AWP Annual Report 2020-21, p16
[70] AWP Annual Report 2020-21, p16
[71] MTR interview
[72] MTR interview
[73] MTR interview
[74] MTR interview

Annex 2: List of Interviewees

Type of interview	Organisation	Contact	Position
Individual	DFAT	Hannah Birdsey	DHOM Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (Ex- Assistant Secretary)
Individual	DFAT	Andrew Egan	Assistant Secretary, Climate Integraton and Programming Branch
Group	DFAT	James Morschel	Assistant Director, WTR
	DFAT	Julie Hart	Senior Policy Officer, WTR
	DFAT	Celina Smith	Water Specialist
Group	DFAT Post	Rhonda Mann	First Secretary, Water & Regional
	DFAT Post	Matthew Lord	
	DFAT Post	Ounheuan Saiyasith	Program Manager (Water)
Group	DFAT Post	Paula Richardson	
	DFAT Post	David Bloch	First Secretary - Development
Group	DFAT Post	Jason Court	First Secretary - Infrastructure, Water, WASH
	DFAT Post	Belinda Costin	First Secretary
Group	DFAT (Advisors)	John Dore	Lead Water Specialist - WTR (Bangkok)
	DFAT (Advisors)	Marcus Howard	Senior WASH Adviser
	DFAT (Advisors)	Tony Slatyer	Special Adviser on Water
Individual	AWP	Michael Wilson	CEO
Individual	AWP	Nicholas Schofield	Former AWP CEO
Individual	AWP	Rory Hunter	Program Lead
Individual	AWP	Sarah Ransom	Partnerships & Impact Lead
Individual	AWP	Shannon Li	Communications Manager
Group	AWP	Caitlin Windross	Senior Program Officer
	AWP	Ingrid Carlier	Senior Program Officer
	AWP	Veitania Lepani	GEDSI and Program Officer
Individual	AWP	Neal Forster	M&E Specialist
Individual	AWP	Stephen Cory	Corporate Services Manager
Individual	AWP	Katharine Cross	Mekong Coordinator
Individual	AWP	Vijay Kumar	South Asia Representative
Group	AWP	Marian Neal	Former AWP Partnerships & Knowledge Manager
	AWP	Simon Tilleard	Former AWP Program Manger
Individual	AWP	Stephen Cory	Chief Operating Officer
Individual	ERP	Colin Chartres	CEO of Crawford Fund
Group	ERP	Jane Doolan	Environment Commissioner, Productivity Commission
	ERP	Daniel Lambert	Arup
Group	ERP	Melita Grant	Uni Technology Sydney

Type of interview	Organisation	Contact	Position
	ERP	Suzette Mitchell	Consultant
Individual	AWPAC - Current and Former Members	Robert McMullan	Chair
Group	AWPAC - Current and Former Members	Leith Boully	Committee Member
	AWPAC - Current and Former Members	Jody Swirepik	Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (DAWE)
Group	eWater Board of Directors	Don Blackmore	Board Chair (eWater)
	eWater Board of Directors	David Dreverman	Executive Director (eWater)
Group	AWP Australian Partner	Will Fargher	Director (Aither)
	AWP Australian Partner	Corinne Cheeseman	CEO, Australia Water Association (AWA)
	AWP Australian Partner	Stuart White	Director (Institute for Sustainable Futures)
Individual	AWP Australian Partner	Russell Rollason	International Development Advisor (eWater)
Individual	AWP Australian Partner	Dr Lachlan Guthrie	Program Manager - IWRM & WASH (IWC)
Group	AWP Australian Partner	Tarek Ketelsen	Director General (AMPERES)
	AWP Australian Partner	Simon Krohn	Simon Krohn Consulting
Individual	International Partners	Lusia Sefo-Leau	CEO (Pacific Water and Wastewater Association)
Individual	International Partners	Lee Baumgartner	CSU
Individual	International Partners	Caroline Turner	FAO
Group	International Partners	Marcus Wishart	World Bank
	International Partners	Mark Thompson	CGIAR
Individual	International Partners	Sanath Ranawana	ADB
Group	BOM	Matthew Coulton	General Manager, Water
	MDBA	Yvette Bettini	Assistant Director, Strategic Policy
Group	CSIRO	Neil Lazarow	Lead - Integrated Regional Water
	CSIRO	Uday Nidumolu	Project Leader, CSIRO
	CSIRO	Tira Foran	Lead Social Scientist and Project Leader, CSIRO
Group	DAWE	Adam Sincock	Director, Urban Water and International Engagement
	DAWE	Dr Qinghong Pu	Assistant Director, Urban Water and International Engagement

Annex 3: List of documents reviewed

- AWP Annual Reports (2015 – 2021)
- AWP M&E Plan 2018 – 2023
- AWP M&E Report 2015 – 2019
- AWP Strategies and Policies
  - AWP Strategic Plan 2018 - 2023
  - GEDSI Implementation Workplan
  - AWP GEDSI Policy 2020 – 2023
  - AWP GEDSI Guidance for Partners (2020)
  - AWP Phase 2 Investment Plan (2021)
  - AWP India Investment Strategy 2019 – 2023
  - AWP ICIMOD Investment Plan (2020)
  - AWP Myanmar Investment Strategy 2018 – 2023
  - Rapid Feasibility Study: AWP Investments in the Pacific (2020)
  - AWP SPC Investment Plan (2020)
- AWP Annual Operating Plan 2020 – 2021
- Partner Performance Assessments (2019, 2020)
- DFAT Performance and Quality Reporting
  - Independent Mid-Term Review (2017)
  - Evaluation of the WaterGuide (2020)
  - Evaluation of Capacity Development Assistance to the PWWA (2019)
  - Capacity Development Effectiveness Review (2020)
  - Myanmar Young Water Professionals Evaluation Report (2019)
  - Annual Investment Monitoring Report (2021)
- Activity-level documents
  - Biodiversity and Irrigation
    - Annex 6: COVID-19 Response
    - Annex 3: Consultation Report

- Activity Completion Report: Project Inception Workshop (2020)

- DWIR Hydraulic Modelling Training
  - Project Proposal (2019)
  - Activity Completion report (2020)
  - Myanmar DWIR Training Report (2019)

- Indo-Pacific COVID-19 Assessment
  - Project Proposal (
  - AWP Newsletter: Vulnerability Assessment (2020)
  - Milestone Report (2020)

- Laos Dam Safety Review
  - Activity Plan
  - Activity Completion Report (2021)
  - Post Contract Review (2021)
  - OOS: Dam Safety Specialist for Lao PDR Dam Safety Review

- Strategic Operating Plan for NWIC
  - Activity Agreements
  - Activity Completion Report (2021)
  - Mission Report (2019)
  - Strategic Operating Plan 2019 – 2024

- Pacific Water and Wastewater Association Funding Support 2019 – 2022
  - Project Proposal
  - Strategic Plan
  - PWWA Funding Support – Program Management and Facilitation Inception Report 2019 – 2022 (2019)
  - PWWA Funding Support – Program Management and Facilitation Progress Report 1 2019 – 2022 (2019)
  - PWWA Funding Support – Program Management and Facilitation Progress Report 2 2019 – 2022 (2019)
  - PWWA Funding Support – Program Management and Facilitation Progress Report 2 2019 – 2022 (2020)
  - PWWA Funding Support – Program Management and Facilitation Progress Report 4 2019 – 2022 (2020)

Annex 4: MTR scope and methodology

Boundaries

The MTR is framed by the following boundaries:

- It will focus on AWP Phase 2 (2019-23) noting that the MTR of Phase 1 was conducted in 2017.
- It will primarily focus on activities funded by two grant agreements between DFAT and eWater ltd - AWP Phase 2 (74826, $24m) and Supporting Australia's International Water Leadership (74798, $2.4m). Additional agreements for the Australia–Mekong Water Facility (75097, $9.9m) and the Pakistan Water Diagnostic and Roadmap (75722, $0.7m) will also be considered but the review will not draw conclusions about the extent to which their expected outcomes were achieved. Activities funded by a final agreement covering the High-level Panel on Water and WaterGuide will not be considered by the MTR (72390, $3.6m)

Principles

The MTR is guided by the following principles:

- Focused on intended MTR uses – The MTR is focused on the purposes and audiences described above. The reviewer will take opportunities to support any learning objectives of primary users throughout the MTR process.
- Collaborative – The reviewer will engage collaboratively with DFAT and AWP throughout the process, to support the partnership spirit of the program, promote buy-in to the review, manage expectations, and enable early discussion about emerging findings.
- Diverse and inclusive – Especially given the reliance on remote data collection processes, the reviewer will make special efforts to include diverse voices in the evaluation – including through sampling and data collection techniques.
- Efficient –Maximum use will be made of available data and reporting, including activity-level reviews conducted by AWP-commissioned evaluations e.g. capacity development evaluation.

Questions

The questions guiding this MTR are described below in Table 1, grouped by DFAT quality criteria. These are based on the questions in the MTR terms of reference, with the following adjustments:

- Table 1 distinguishes MTR questions from the key Issues embedded within each question. Compared to the MTR ToRs, this results in a more manageable number of questions that are more clearly distinct from each other (noting that the questions will form section headings in the evaluation report). Alignment between each question and its key issues is also clearer.
- Minor changes to the phrasing of questions/issues have been made to reflects inception meetings with DFAT and AWP about priority information needs.

- A small number of questions have been removed given they either overlap with other questions in Table 1, were not raised as priorities during inception meetings, and/or it would not be feasible for the MTR to answer them with available resources[75].

- While all questions were raised as important in inception meetings, Question 2 (strengths and weaknesses of the AWP model) is likely to be the most useful in terms of informing Phase 2 strategic reforms already underway and framing the Phase 3 design.

Note that as part of its recommendations relating to each of the questions below, the MTR will identify i) ways to further improve Phase 2 implementation and ii) more substantial changes to AWP that could be considered as part of the Phase 3 design process.

Table 1: MTR Questions

Criteria	Questions	Key issues
Effectiveness	1. **To what extent is AWP (Phase 2) making progress against its long-term development outcomes?**	• extent of progress toward long-term outcomes, including extent to which AWP is enabling decision makers to strengthen water resource management in their own countries/regions • appropriateness of these long-term outcomes
Appropriateness of implementation approach[76]	2. **What are the strengths and weaknesses of AWP's model?**	• 'demand-led v strategic approach'; balance between development and public diplomacy orientation • multiple governance arrangements • conflict of interest risk management[77] • health of key AWP partnerships with Australian and international water organisations, including mutual benefits • Australian partner capacities in international engagement and development
GEDSI	3. **How well is gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) being addressed by AWP?**	• Appropriateness of AWP's processes for promoting GEDSI, and how well they have been applied
Monitoring and evaluation	4. **How fit for purpose are AWP's M&E arrangements?**	• alignment with DFAT information needs • aggregating project-level results against AWP's theory of change • appropriateness of emerging directions set by performance management system refresh
Relevance	5. **To what extent is AWP responsive to Australia's priorities?**	• ability to align with and link to Australia's international development program and water diplomacy efforts

[75] These questions were 'To what extent has AWP assisted our region to respond to and adapt to the effects of climate change?' and 'Given the changed context and progress since the start of the program, how has the risk profile changed for the Partnership?'
[76] This is also referred to as 'efficiency' in DFAT's Investment Monitoring Reports etc.
[77] The MTR will draw broad conclusions about the extent to which AWP's modality has enabled it to manage conflict of interest risks to the satisfaction of key stakeholders. It will not provide a formal assessment of whether conflicts of interest exist.

Criteria	Questions	Key issues
		• ability to respond to Australian government policy changes i.e. Pacific Step up; Partnerships for Recovery – COVID19; Foreign Policy White Paper, Climate Change Action Strategy.

Overview of methodology

MTR data collection and analysis will be mostly qualitative. Data will be gathered through document review (n=60), semi-structured group and individual interviews (n-40), and unstructured observation of key AWP events. Up to six AWP activities will be selected for more in-depth data collection. Quantitative analysis of AWP project management system data may also be conducted to summarise AWP's activity portfolio. All data will be thematically coded against the MTR questions and key issues (see Table 1) and used to generate preliminary findings. These will be discussed with MTR primary users, along with initial thinking on recommendations, before the MTR is drafted.

Sampling

In addition to collecting data about AWP overall, the MTR will also explore a small number of AWP activities in greater depth. In the time available, it will be possible for the MTR to examine up to six activities - three based on document review only, and three based on document review plus interviews. If activity-specific data collection is more intensive than originally anticipated, the number of sampled activities may be reduced. For large or complex activities, the MTR may need to further narrow its focus on a key activity component.

The MTR will adopt a purposive sampling approach, guided by the following considerations:

- Activities will be sampled to maximise variation in terms of the following criteria:
  - whether part of one of AWP's 16 program clusters (yes / no)
  - origin of request (direct to international partner heavily involved, Post heavily involved, other)
  - activity timeframe (started in Phase 1 / started in Phase 2)
  - Activity budget (<$100,000 / $100,000-$250,000 / >$250,000)
  - Geographic focus (South Asia, Mekong, Pacific, Global)
  - Type (policy, practice, tools / capacity development / knowledge products, events, and communications (KPEC))[78]
- Given it will be difficult to cover all these subgroups in a sample of six activities, the MTR will prioritise subgroups that represent a larger proportion of AWP's total activity spend.
- Within each subgroup, the MTR will seek to identify typical (rather than unusual) cases.

[78] Sample will include a maximum of two activities that are primarily KPEC in type

- Activities already covered by AWP-led reviews will be excluded (e.g. capacity development evaluation; policies, practices, tools evaluation; ongoing performance story collation process)

It is important to note that findings will aim to be illustrative of a range of typical AWP activity experiences, but not representative in a statistical sense.

Data collection

Semi-structured interviews

Interviews will be guided by broad questions and prompts, with flexibility to respond to the issues raised during discussion. Approximately 40 interviews will be conducted with:

- **DFAT staff**, including the Water Security Section (current and former), Assistant Secretary (current and former) and Directors from the Climate Integration and Programming Branch, Posted officers who engage with AWP, and relevant technical advisors
- **AWP staff** including the CEO (current and former), management team (current Program Lead and Partnerships and Impact Lead; former Program Manager and Partnerships and Knowledge Manager; Communications Manager), program officers (Senior Program officers, GEDSI/Program Officer, M&E Specialist) and regional coordinators (Mekong Coordinator, South Asia Coordinator)
- **AWP Advisory Committee** (AWPAC) Chair and selected members
- **Expert Review Panel** (ERP) Chair and selected members including GESI specialists
- **eWater Board of Directors** Chair and ex-Executive Director (David Dreverman, currently non-executive Director)
- DAWE, CSIRO, and MDBA staff
- AWP Australian partner leadership or senior staff
- AWP international partner leadership or senior staff
- In-country partner staff
- **AWP consultants** currently conducting tasks relevant to the MTR

Document and database review

The MTR will review over 60 program documents, including program agreements and standards, strategies and policies, progress reports, and knowledge products. For sampled activities (see above), activity-specific documentation will be reviewed e.g. terms of reference or concepts, proposals, progress reports, and key outputs. The reviewer may also work with the AWP program manager to analyse project management system data as required (for example to calculate total AWP expenditure on a specific subgroup of activities).

Observation

The reviewer will conduct unstructured observation of an AWPAC meeting in July and a webinar for partners on working with AWP.

Data analysis

The MTR will conduct thematic analysis to group collected data according to the MTR questions and key issues (see Table 1) as well as other key issues or sub-issues that emerge during data collection.

Quantitative analysis may also be conducted based on AWP project management system data, to summarise important aspects of AWP's activity portfolio e.g. % activities that fall within program clusters.

Findings and recommendations

Based on analysed data, the MTR report will present findings against each of the MTR questions. Practical recommendations will also be proposed. Preliminary findings and recommendations will be presented and discussed with the DFAT Water Security Section and AWP Management team before the draft MTR report is submitted for formal feedback.

The report will aim to be approximately 20-25 pages excluding annexes. A 1-2 page summary of each MTR-sampled activity will be annexed, covering the activity's scope, results, challenges, and lessons relating to the MTR questions.

Ethical considerations

The MTR will be guided by the Australasian Evaluation Society Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Evaluations. Confidentiality will be protected wherever possible. Where report text may identify a respondent, it will be shared with the individual for review before the MTR draft is submitted. All respondents will be informed about the purpose of the MTR and DFAT's role as commissioner.

Limitations

Limitations applying to the MTR are:

- Within the limited time available, it will not be possible to provide a representative picture of the performance of AWP's many activities nor answer all questions in equal depth
- Most interviews will be conducted remotely, which may limit rapport and candour. There may also be technical challenges for respondents with limited bandwidth.
- No in-country data collection will be conducted, which may limit the MTR's understanding of the context and effectiveness of sampled activities

Communications

The reviewer will meet at least fortnightly with DFAT and AWP separately to discuss MTR progress and agree changes to the MTR schedule and process as needed.