

Rose Jackson

Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness,
Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, Minister for North Coast



Penny Sharpe

Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment,
Minister for Heritage

Media Release

Independent inquiry into Menindee Fish Deaths

Monday, 15 May 2023

The NSW Government has asked the Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer (OCSE) to conduct an Independent Review of the unprecedented deaths of millions of fish at Menindee in March 2023.

Minister for Water, Rose Jackson, said the deaths sent shockwaves around the world and it was essential to better understand the cause and explore strategies to prevent a recurrence.

“We are requesting this independent inquiry to provide the community with certainty that we are thoroughly investigating this matter.

“In this Review, the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer will consider the likely cause of the fish deaths event, its effects, the overall response and then make recommendations on what needs to be done to stop this happening again,” Ms Jackson said.

“We anticipate the review will be completed and released by August 31. The findings and recommendations will drive the NSW Government’s strategic response to what is undeniably an environmental event of massive proportions.”

Minister for the Environment Penny Sharpe said OCSE had established a strong reputation for providing independent reports that deliver science-based recommendations that have gone on to shape government policy.

“For more than a decade OCSE has been providing an invaluable service to the NSW Government, particularly when impartial advice was needed about contentious issues,” Ms Sharpe said.

NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer Professor Hugh Durrant-Whyte said OCSE would be conducting a broad ranging inquiry, under the Review’s Terms of Reference.

“There is no doubt the extraordinary number of fish deaths has had a far-reaching effect on Western NSW and beyond,” Professor Durrant-Whyte said.

“My Office will be consulting broadly to examine the cause of the fish deaths and will seek advice from subject matter experts to shape the recommendations it will make to the NSW Government.”

The Inquiry’s Terms of Reference and further information about how to make submissions can be found at www.chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au/independent-reports/menindee-fish-deaths.

Background

The Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer has four main functions:

- supporting R&D investment,
- translating research into commercial products, leading to jobs and industry growth,
- science outreach and education support,
- providing technical reviews and scientific advice to the NSW Government.

It provides independent advice about complex policy problems that involve engineering and/or science and affect multiple stakeholders.

The reviews conducted by the Office help the creation of government policy as well as provide evidence-based information advice to Ministers and agencies informed by subject matter expertise. Topics of previous reviews and inquiries include: the State's koala population, energy security, decarbonisation, tunnel air quality, and mining in the Sydney catchment.

Further information about the previous reports, reviews and inquiries conducted by OCSE can be found at: <https://www.chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au/independent-reports>

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