Richmond River
(Toonumbar Dam)

ROSCECo Notes

Attendees
Catherine Magner, Chris Magner, Paul Clarke, Lyn Lee, Heather McCloy, Norm Roatz, Joe Leven, Cheryl Riordan, Michael Riordan, Maurice Summerville, Cameron Bennett, Leigh Sherman, Tony Wilson, Les Hellyar, Fleur Tonge, Wayne Clarke, Miranda Saunders, Domonic Hogg, Peter Ludlow, Diane King, Rob Carr, Matt Scheibel, Simon Stahl, Andrew Leach, Ben Cliff, Dave Cliff, Maureen McDonald, Phillip Bornholt, Holger Zeiler, Jo Behrens, Dan Berry, Martin Prendergast, Mahmood Khan, Tracey Schultz.

Lunch commenced at 12.00noon and the meeting commenced at 12.30pm.

1. Introduction
   - Dan Berry from WaterNSW welcomed the participants and gave an overview of the Terms of Reference and the purpose of the meeting.
   - Dan provided an overview of WaterNSW and how it was formed.
   - Conflict of interest in the terms of reference was clarified to highlight any agenda items that involve services to WaterNSW and tenders etc, rather than the expected interest in water.
   - Clarification was provided around the scope of the meeting
   - Introductions were provided by all attendees
• There are currently 10 Water User Groups across the Richmond River and over 1,000 licences held. Water User Groups currently meet on an as needs basis. These groups are affiliated with the NSW Irrigators Council.

• The ROSCCo meetings intend to work with groups already organised as well as other users as required. WaterNSW also intend to use the ROSCCo meetings to bring other agencies together so that the appropriate people are there to provide relevant input as required.

2. Regulated Richmond River Current Status and Operations Options

• Rainfall is quite low compared to average

• Assuming 35ML/d of releases (worst case scenario), the Richmond River (Toonumbar Dam) will be dry by around April 2020. Toonumbar Dam Forecast storage volume was presented using various assumptions including 20%, 50%, 80%, minimum, actual and zero inflow scenarios

• 1,000ML for E-flows was removed from year 6 of the Water Sharing Plan.

• There is currently no town water or environmental water availability in the dam.

• There are currently temporary water restrictions in systems throughout the state. This could also occur in Toonumbar Dam if rainfall is not received. The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) make the decisions around allocations and WaterNSW operate the system around these decisions

• Question around why can’t end of system flows cease whilst there are no inflows and dam levels reduced? There are currently provisions in the plan and WaterNSW can liaise with users and see if block releases may be viable. The meeting stated the preference would be a stable flow as not many on farm storages are available to hold water if block releases occur.

• Suggestions were called for on how to better schedule the releases.

• Discussion around usage and an increase is seen on weekends when smaller landowners visit. Fairly stable during week days.

• WaterNSW asked all river users to place orders when water is required and cancel if the order is not required for any reason. This will enable WaterNSW to run the river leaner so ensure minimal losses.
• Various scenarios were discussed, with the meeting participants deciding to continue at the current release rates and run the river water until the dam empties.

• If large water orders are received, WaterNSW may need to relook at the current water release configuration.

• Bores are not very reliable in the area, only a few users currently have them. Discussion around ground water availability once the river water dried up. Government assistance is available for water carting and information around this can be found here.

• Community need to be kept informed around how much water is left and how long it will last. Community needs time to plan. All of the community may not be aware of the criticality of the water issue and may only realise when the water is no longer available. Action: WaterNSW to put a communications plan into action

• Regulated irrigators recommended to continue with current releases as fine tuned as possible. Communication with water users is essential. When changes in forecasts and other information is produced by WaterNSW, this is required to be provided to all participants to keep them up to date and informed. (as per above action – communications plan)

3 Richmond River Water Sharing Plan Operations

• Dan recognised the large number of unregulated and Tidal irrigators at the meeting and sought feedback on the operation of the ROSCCo for both the Regulated and unregulated parts of the valley.

• Dan sought to collect issues, categorise, and prioritise the range of issues with the operation of the Unregulated WSP. Some urgent, some long term.

• Water Insights - Discussion was held around the conversion of EC to TDS’s. There is an issue in the plan which doesn’t clarify when pumping is allowed. A conversion needs to be provided and confirmed so extraction decisions can be made. There is a large difference for the numbers between high and low tides. Plan states readings at low tide but results are not always conducted/provided at low tide.

• WaterNSW is planning to provide this information on the Realtime data website here.

• Since the Water Sharing Plan was introduced in 2010, pumps were changed from small to large, and as there are no meters to record usage, this may have a dramatic effect on water usage during low flows.
• Previously, Water User Groups were formed (over 45 years ago) and were developed by the relevant authority (voluntary). The groups were seen as a critical part of the community to communicate roster arrangements with all users when the cease to pump conditions were applied. This was seen to be the best way of sharing the available water. The Water Sharing Plan did not recognise these arrangements. Local Water Users made the decision to cease to pump. Who is responsible for making these decisions now? WaterNSW stated that NRAR are the authority to make the call on compliance with rules, and WaterNSW operate the system.

• Issues with cease to pump/commence to pump - rules around conditions are unclear.

• Gauging in the wrong catchments - Bungawalbyn should be its own water source.

• There appear to be different interpretations on the Dealing (trading) rules in the WSP and linking larger works. Lost historical knowledge that was previously available due to staff leaving the department, and new staff with different interpretations.

• Unable to reach individuals at WaterNSW sites.

• Mapping errors in the Water Sharing Plan

• The Plan is supposed to be reviewed by the end of this year. Is it on track?

• Moving water to other properties. Non-titled - Whole of Source was the previous title and as it is no longer worded in the Water Sharing Plan it cannot be moved.

• Licence conditions should take precedence over the Water Sharing Plan.

4. **General discussion around the floor**

• Three phases for the future meetings was discussed. The next meeting will commence with the Regulated Water Users, then Combined, then Unregulated Water Users.

• Face to face meetings was the preferred way of communicating

Presentation can be found [here](#)

Meeting closed at 3.15pm
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<td>WaterNSW</td>
<td>Media release provided early January. Closed</td>
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<td>cease to flow in March/April next year</td>
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