

# Border Rivers Customer Advisory Group

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**Minutes of Meeting**  
**Wednesday 28 February 2018**  
**Gateway to Training, 15-21 Russell St, Goondiwindi**

**Present:** Brett Corish (Chair), David Coulton, Bruce Coward, Daryl Cleeve, Jane Humphries, Lindsay White, Alex Norman, Ian Saunders, Tim Napier (observer), Ben Warby (observer), Jonathan Dickson, Craig Cahill, Andrew Fraser, Luigi Castro and Toni Hayes (minutes).

Ronan Magarahan attended via Skype for agenda item 7.1.

Chris Braddock and Nahaz Chowdhury attended via Skype for agenda item 8.7-8.9.

**Meeting Opened:** 9.00am.

**Welcome and introductions.**

1. **Apologies:** Anthony Barlow, Sam Heagney, Michael Owen, David Stockler.
2. **Confirmation of Agenda Items:**
  - Nil additional agenda items tabled.
3. **Declaration of Interest(s):**
  - Declarations of interest were sought from attendees in relation to the meeting's agenda items. No interests were declared. Items included in the agenda are not considered confidential unless declared as such.
4. **Minutes of Previous Meeting, 28 August 2017:**
  - Resolved the minutes of meeting held on 28 August 2017 be confirmed as a correct record. Taken as read.
5. **Actions arising from minutes:**
  - See action sheet attached.
6. **Water Delivery**
- 6.1 **Water System Operations Report (C Cahill)**
  - WaterNSW provided an update on the water system operations report, including a flood update – <http://www.waternsw.com.au/customer-service/news/operations>
  - Next water year, it is intended NSW will draw more water from Glenlyon Dam to satisfy demand.
  - Operational losses discussed. Customers noted that operational losses in the northern systems provide critical water supply benefits for downstream users in the Barwon-Darling system and suggested this should be turned into a good news story. WaterNSW advised this is highlighted in its weekly water availability reports which are publicly available on the internet.
  - Customers commended the Water Operations team on ability to ensure minimal operational losses following a very dry season.
  - No planned outages. Currently have an issue at Boggabilla where anodes have come off one of the gates, which means gates can't be shut. WaterNSW is waiting on an opportunity to rectify, but should be done in the next week with lower water levels expected.

## **7. System Operation and Asset Services**

### **7.1 Asset Maintenance and Services Update (R Magarahan)**

- Asset performance and maintenance in the Border Rivers presented and discussed, including asset maintenance and performance.

## **8. Presentations/Consultation**

### **8.1 Regulatory Update (J Dickson)**

#### **Reform Update**

- The final Matthews' Report, MDBA and Ombudsman's reports, were released in November 2017. WaterNSW held a number of meetings with customer groups, including CAG Chairs, in December 2017 to discuss resulting recommendations and seek customer input on key elements in the reports.
- Metering, resource/market information, compliance and protection of environmental flows remain key issues. WaterNSW will also be advocating for other legislative reforms (including making rules, roles and responsibilities clearer). Timeline presented and discussed.
- DOI Water has established a taskforce to implement the NSW government's action plan to reform water management. There will be a brief intensive period of consultation with tight deadlines. WaterNSW will be making a submission and water users will have the opportunity to engage with the taskforce directly.

#### **Summary of December Workshops**

- Summary of feedback from WaterNSW meetings with customers presented and discussed. Key feedback items include compliance, water take measurement, water information and environmental flows.
- Customers noted that when talking about compliance it is inferred that the majority are doing the right thing, which implies 51%. Suggested that WaterNSW be more specific and state that the figure is much higher. Is about public perception.
- Customers stated that communication with customers is crucial to ensure people know what any changes mean to them on the ground. WaterNSW agrees and stated that once compliance responsibilities are clear with the establishment of NRAR, we will advise customers as soon as possible.
- Pattern approval and metering standards, including grandfathering clause, discussed. Customers of the view that if meeting the interim standards (which apply to 2019) should be fine regardless of pattern approvals.

### **8.2 Voice of Customer Framework (J Dickson)**

- WaterNSW has recently introduced some changes to make things easier for customers and to keep customers informed, including a new layout for WaterNSW invoices, electronic billing and a list of communications customers can subscribe to.
- Customers queried if they can receive consolidated accounts rather than multiple. WaterNSW advised this is included in upgrades currently in progress and will be available to customers in time, if they elect the options.
- This week WaterNSW launched "Your Voice", a platform for customers to start a conversation, connect with others and provide feedback and insights into our future products and services. CAG members have been automatically registered for the online community.

### **8.3 Customer Communications (J Dickson)**

#### **Phone/CIMS Update**

- Implementation of WaterNSW's new phone system was successfully completed in December 2017.

#### **Conditions Mailout**

- WaterNSW was requested by DOI Water to manage a Licence Conditions mailing on its behalf. WaterNSW extended our service centre capacity to capture and log queries, which are then allocated to a locally-based Licensing Officer for review/discussion with customers.
- Licence holders have 28 days to lodge a submission regarding any "discretionary/other" conditions.
- Customers in other valleys have identified some errors in the conditions on their licences. Customers are encouraged to contact the call centre if they come across any anomalies.

### **8.4 Levels of Service (LOS) Project Update (A Fraser/L Castro)**

- Project status update and timeline presented and discussed. Formal customer engagement commenced this week with Lachlan CAG members, with a workshop for Border Rivers planned for May 2018.
- The workshop will provide an opportunity for targeted consultation with customers about WaterNSW's bulk water services and customer LOS preferences. The main objective is to hear customers' views on LOS issues, identify key LOS gaps in the valleys that need to be addressed, and understand customer long-term LOS priorities/preferences in the valley.
- WaterNSW will contact CAG members with workshop dates and venue options in March. Initial consultation will be with CAG members and WaterNSW will review if other stakeholders should be included going forward.
- Customers are weary of the process, noting particular projects have been articulated to WaterNSW many times prior. Concerned that this is another tick-a-box exercise. WaterNSW acknowledged customer sentiment however advised that there is now an opportunity to move beyond talking and include specific projects in our next submission to IPART.
- Customers stated that Queensland customers should be included in the workshop/discussions for it to be meaningful.

### **8.5 Local Water Utility (LWU) Review Update (J Dickson)**

- Discussions are ongoing with NSW Health and Local Health Units. The focus over the next few months will be consultation with Local Water Utilities, with outcomes to be incorporated into the review. The monitoring review is due December 2018 with final report due June 2019.

### **8.6 Update on Carp Herpes Virus (J Dickson)**

- The FRDC is leading a project on potential release of the carp herpes virus. WaterNSW has undertaken some research and results have shown a decrease in dissolved oxygen levels, increase in bacteria and potential algal blooms, all of which may have the potential to compromise WaterNSW's ability to deliver suitable water to our customers. This research has been shared with the FRDC.
- The FRDC is establishing a number of working groups, which WaterNSW will be involved in. WaterNSW is completing further research to inform an operational response to minimise the impact of the virus on WaterNSW customers.
- Potential timing and release of the virus is proposed for late 2018.

### **8.7 Annual Capital Plan (C Braddock)**

- Annual Capital Plan for the Border Rivers presented and discussed, including forecast, projects in progress (rural automation) and new projects (small flow regulator replacement).

### **8.8 Fish Passage Update (C Braddock)**

- A Ministerial Taskforce on Fish Passage was established in July 2017 with the objective to capitalise on four significant funding options for restoring fish passage in the Murray-Darling Basin.
- The Taskforce aims to propose a NSW Fish Passage Strategy addressing key matters in the Terms of Reference. An approach was presented to the Minister at the end of 2017 with a number of recommendations. The Minister has now extended the timeline through to the end of 2018 to allow further evaluation and detail opportunities.
- In parallel, a WaterNSW project team has been established to progress feasibility design studies, performance criteria, develop standard designs, apply methodology and provide a state-wide estimate. A draft project management plan has been prepared and project completion scheduled for end-2019.
- There are currently 9 fish passage obligations remaining across the state.

### **8.9 Cold Water Pollution (CWP) Asset Strategy Update (A Fraser)**

- WaterNSW is required under some work approvals to address cold water pollution (CWP), subject to funding availability, with the objective to develop a cold water pollution strategy to quantify benefits of addressing CWP, develop asset solution options and prioritise WaterNSW dams.
- Asset solutions are being developed with a focus on the four priority sites (Copeton, Wyangala, Blowering and Keepit dams). A cost benefit analysis will be undertaken to determine economic viability of the proposed options and dams will be prioritised accordingly.

### **Burrendong Temperature Curtain Update (M Clayton)**

- An update on the Burrendong Temperature Curtain was provided, including background, current status and ongoing testing and assessment. Curtain reinstatement and commissioning is scheduled for completion March/April and once reinstated, WaterNSW will resume monitoring and testing.
- The curtain is a prototype, and assuming it is successful, there is a limited number of structures that it would be feasible on. However where suitable, could be a low cost solution to addressing CWP.

### **8.10 Regulatory Economics (J Dickson)**

#### **WAMC Determination Update**

- The current WAMC determination runs through to 2020 with functions split between WaterNSW and DOI Water. New pricing submissions are due by 30 June 2019.
- Recommendations from reviews arising from the Four Corners story (July 2017) and the formation of the new Natural Resource Access Regulator may result in a different resourcing allocation between WaterNSW, DOI Water and other agencies.
- Further guidance on the WAMC Determination will be provided once the resourcing and policy issues arising from this work are settled by government.

### **Wentworth to Broken Hill Pipeline (W2BHP) Determination Update**

- The pipeline will be subject to a new IPART pricing determination. WaterNSW has commenced engagement with customers along the pipeline, including Essential Water.
- WaterNSW is required to submit its pricing proposed to IPART by 30 June 2018. IPART will commence its review of prices of Essential Water's water and sewerage services in Broken Hill at the same time.

### **Rural Valleys Determination**

- The rural valleys determination runs through to 2021, with a new pricing proposal due to IPART on 30 June 2020.
- WaterNSW will continue to seek customer input to advocate for customer choice. This will include but not be limited to whether tariff structures can be improved; looking to apply greater cost reflectivity; simplicity and incentives for cost savings.
- Updates will be provided to CAGs as work progresses.

### **Zero Dollar Trades**

- WaterNSW has been asked questions around zero dollar trades. 60% of trades during the last water year across the MDB were declared zero dollars as the traded value.
- The basin trading rules require that the seller must notify the Approval Authority (in this case WaterNSW) in writing of the agreed price. WaterNSW recognises that some of these trades very likely will be related party transactions and is looking into its responsibilities in relation to processing trades. Discussed.
- Customers questioned the benefit and what is to be achieved by pursuing this information as is a commercial dealing and outside of WaterNSW realm. WaterNSW noted that information will provide a level of transparency in terms of a large trading market and is a requirement of the basin trading rules.

## **9. Reports**

Noted and taken as read.

## **10. General Business**

### **10.1 Border Rivers Meter Fleet**

- Customers questioned whether it would be worthwhile to put together a file of current existing meters in the Border Rivers so it is available and ready when required. The last one was done in 2011/12 and is outdated.
- WaterNSW advised that it has had similar requests from other valleys. Until the rules come out it is difficult to determine what we can and cannot publish.

## **Meeting Review and Close**

**Next Meetings:** Tuesday 5 June 2018 (Skype)  
Wednesday 29 August 2018 (Goondiwindi)

**Meeting closed:** 12.50pm

Carried Forward Actions			
Action No. yymm.action no	Action	Responsibility	Status
BR1708.01	WaterNSW to liaise with BRC/Boomi Trust to confirm who owns Boomi Weir and Regulator and who pays for maintenance in order to progress required works.	C Cahill	<p><b>Complete.</b> Historically, maintenance has been paid for by Boomi Trust. It now appears that the assets are actually owned by WaterNSW (vested in last Vesting Order).</p> <p>WaterNSW needs to work out how to appropriately charge for works. Previously we've done the work and billed the Trust for the work and we will look at price/costing options in the next IPART determination.</p>

New Actions			
Action No. yymm.action no	Action	Responsibility	Status
	Nil new actions.		