

# Murrumbidgee Customer Advisory Group - Minutes of Meeting



**Location:** Quest Apartments, GRIFFITH

**Date:** 28 March 2019

**Time:** 9.00am

**Present:** Brendan Barry (Chair), Iva Quarisa, Paul Maytom, Nick Maynard, Bruce Campbell, James Maguire, Peter Sheppard, Tanya Thompson, Jenny McLeod (observer), Steven Cunial (observer), David Harris, David Stockler, Jonathan Dickson, Adrian Langdon, Vince Kelly, Eddy Taylor, Enrico Proietti, Sonia Townsend, and Toni Hayes (minutes).

**Meeting Opened:** 9.00am.

## 1. Welcome and introductions:

### 1.1 Confirmation of Agenda Items

- Refer to General Business.

### 1.2 Apologies

- Scott Hogan, Karen Hutchinson, Alan Shea, Debbie Buller.

### 1.3 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.

### 1.4 Minutes of Previous Meeting, 18 September 2018

- Resolved the minutes of meeting held on 18 September 2018 be confirmed as a correct record. Taken as read.

*P Sheppard/N Maynard  
carried*

### 1.5 Actions arising from minutes

- See action sheet attached.

## 2. Water Delivery:

### 2.1 Water System Operations Report (V Kelly)

- WaterNSW presented the operations plan for the Murrumbidgee, including water availability, resource assessment distribution, inflows, operational surplus and storage forecast. The plan is publicly available on WaterNSW's website at [waternsw.com.au/customer-service/news/operations](http://waternsw.com.au/customer-service/news/operations).
- Transmission losses presented and discussed. Customers questioned why predicted transmission losses are higher in the winter months. WaterNSW advised that it is based on historical information. End of system loss is a different measure.
- Comparison of initial budgeted annual Yanco Creek loss to the actuals presented and discussed. Customers noted there was concern in the community that there was no communication in relation to Tarabah Weir being shut off. Suggested communication should

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have been done earlier to stop the rumour mill. Could have been circumvented if had prior knowledge and Yanco could have put something out. Noted by WNSW.

- Refurbishment of Wynburn and Baupie Escapes discussed. OEH noted that replacement with an undershot metal gate is problematic for eWater and requested input into the design on the remaining two structures. Has been flagged in the past. OEH would be prepared to be funding partners. Taken on notice, E Taylor will discuss with the project manager.

## 2.2 Operational Drought Update (A Langdon)

- Extreme event policy principles, extreme events stages and hierarchy of water priorities presented.
- Water sources drought status update presented for NSW water sources. Southern valleys are operating to WSP rules (stage 1, normal operations) however going into winter months will start moving into drought planning. Northern valleys are operating under drought stages 2-4 (emerging drought to critical drought).
- Critical Water Advisory Panels (CWAP) have been established in the northern inland regulated river valleys and the Barwon-Darling/Lower Darling to advise on appropriate management actions in extreme events. Will commence in southern valleys in due course.
- To support local input for the CWAP meetings, WaterNSW intends to form local steering groups by valley, for local operational and drought input. As drought continues, this group will make recommendations and provide advice to WaterNSW for DoIW as to how inflows should be shared/distributed etc and provide valuable input to the CWAP. WaterNSW will establish these groups based on the severity of conditions, as drought extends through the state.
- **Southern Valleys situation:** Murrumbidgee, Murray and Lachlan system inflows vs water allocations graphs for the last 10 years presented and discussed.
- **Northern Valleys situation:** Border Rivers, Gwydir, Namoi, Macquarie-Cudgegong system inflows vs water allocations for the last 10 years; Balonne flows upstream of St George; Barwon-Darling extraction vs inflows graphs presented and discussed.
- The message WaterNSW is emphasising is that this is a six-year drought, not a two-year drought. Extractive users in the north have been allocated minimal water during this time.
- **Situation at Menindee:** presented and discussed Barwon-Darling vs Menindee Lakes inflows graphs; northern valley storages vs Menindee Lakes graphs (Menindee is filling in the same pattern as the northern storages); water losses July 2016-January 2019; Darling Rivers flows and Menindee Lakes storage operations and volumes 2016/19; and distribution of water 2016-19.
- Customers questioned if the community perception of “the lakes being drained”, as presented in the media, is true. WaterNSW advised this statement is untrue. Menindee Lakes has been operated better in the last sequence than in the past. The difference between now and 2015/16 is that we were able to hold a greater volume in the upper lakes. If the water hadn't been drawn it would have been lost in evaporation. If it didn't come from Menindee, then it would have come from Hume, which would have resulted in the Murray being far worse than is current and would have had a significant impact on the rest of the system.
- Water is complicated and it is difficult to communicate the rules and the way the system operates to the broader populous. We have held public meetings in Menindee every six months since 2014 where this information has been presented over and over. The message is out there but people have differing agendas.
- WaterNSW's obligation is to ensure people are able to access the facts. We are doing this through increased media (ABC, Landline, media releases, social media), drought roadshows,

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fact sheets and audio presentations on our website, our water insights portal etc. The message is slowly starting to get out there that this a drought of record.

- Customers noted this information is vital, so people can understand what has happened.
- **Why are we in this situation:** NSW rainfall and temperature graphs and comparison of drought inflows (Burrinjuck, Blowering, Wyangala, Glenlyon, Pindari, Copeton, Keepit, Split Rock and Burrendong dams) presented. New droughts of record are being seen in the northern valleys.
- Customers noted that one of the issues being discussed is around licensing of floodplain harvesting (FPH). Would be good to understand where that sits in the volume being extracted in the last few years. WaterNSW noted this is a policy issue that DoIW is working on. Looking at moving the Barwon-Darling into active management where FPH is an issue and the volume of water taken will be measured (regulations still being worked out). DoIW is currently working on the definition of FPH as there is no way of quantifying it at the moment.
- There are strong views from areas of the public that think FPH is going to negatively impact areas in the south and that FPH has reduced available water over the last two years. It was noted that these views are either politically motivated or ill-informed.
- WaterNSW is happy to present this information to people/groups as required/requested. Further information is available on WaterNSW's website at [waternsw.com.au/supply/drought-information](http://waternsw.com.au/supply/drought-information)

### 2.3 Water Insight Portal (A Langdon)

- Preparation is underway of a valley by valley website which will be a single, interactive dashboard for customers to use to aid on-farm decisions, including storage, water quality, allocation, distribution, inter-valley trade, tributary flow, rainfall, news/updates. Expected to be available by end of June 2019 to all valleys, however will be launched in the Murrumbidgee early April.
- Customers provided the following suggestions for inclusion: what water is going past (who owns it); upstream water quality; contact details for questions.
- Feedback and suggestions can be provided to [Toni.Hayes@waternsw.com.au](mailto:Toni.Hayes@waternsw.com.au).

### 2.4 Operational Loss Update (A Langdon)

- During the last round of CAGs, customers requested WaterNSW present a breakdown of operational and system losses in Operations Plans going forward.
- A project has commenced to investigate this, however the detail required by valley is significant and complex. This will be a longer-term project.
- Overview of project and progress provided. Updates will be provided to the CAG as the project develops.
- Customers queried if groundwater extraction impacts on river losses. WaterNSW advised there is interaction between the two. The river is one source of groundwater recharge but mostly it is floodplain.

### 2.5 Drought Response (J Dickson)

- Critical Water Advisory Panels (CWAP) have commenced in the north, with the south to follow in due course.
- WaterNSW has heightened its communications to customers on the drought, including publishing valley-specific information on drought; weekly commentary on greatest impacted valleys and critical issues commentary. We have also increased engagement with other water agencies.

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- Customers can subscribe to weekly updates at [waternsw.com.au/customer-service/news/subscribe](http://waternsw.com.au/customer-service/news/subscribe).
- **Coming soon:** WSP/WRP changes mid-term – WaterNSW is in discussions with DoIW to establish a forum for stakeholder input on proposed changes/effects to the WRP mid-term. Potentially will be an agenda item at CAGs going forward to discuss, understand and suggest changes as they arise.

### 3. Assets

#### 3.1 Asset Maintenance and Services Update (E Taylor)

- Asset performance and maintenance in the Murrumbidgee and Lowbidgee valleys presented and discussed, including safety improvements, asset performance, maintenance, breakdown/defects and other items of note.

### 4. Presentations/Consultation

#### 4.1 Compliance (J Dickson)

- At the request of members during the last CAG round, the Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) will meet with CAG members immediately after the CAG meeting to discuss with NRAR its strategic priorities and direction.

#### 4.2 NSW Government Fixed Fee Rebate Update (J Dickson)

- A total of 34,114 customers have received rebates to date as well as customers of eight irrigation corporations. Rebates will continue to be issued for the balance of this water year.
- For **regulated** customers, the rebate will be applied equally over four bills, commencing Q4 of the last water year.
- For **unregulated** and **groundwater** customers, the rebate will be applied to the next bill (covering 2017/18 charges).
- High Security and Government Agencies are excluded from the rebate.
- Go to [dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/droughthub](http://dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/droughthub) for more information.

#### 4.3 Regulatory Update (J Dickson)

##### Reform Update

- WaterNSW provided an update on water reform, including work in progress on metering and telemetry, Duly Qualified Person (DQP) framework and inactive works. It is intended that by 1 April 2019, all elements will be in place to allow customers to understand if and how meter regulations will apply to them.
- **Metering:** the Task Force and MDBA have released a list of current pattern approved (and potential pattern approved) meters [mdba.gov.au/sites/default/files/pubs/pattern-approved-non-urban-water-meters.pdf](http://mdba.gov.au/sites/default/files/pubs/pattern-approved-non-urban-water-meters.pdf)
- **Telemetry:** single framework to be owned by DoIW, equipment to be owned by individuals; cloud-based solution; intent for customers to have access to the data; Data Acquisition Service (DAS) tender underway; intent that all water agencies will access the data.
- **Still to come:** Reasonable Use Guidelines, meter ownership discussion, reporting on non-telemetered meters, DoIW/Task Force engagement.
- Meter ownership is still sitting with the Task Force. Timeframes etc are still unknown.

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#### **IPART Cost Share Review**

- IPART issued its final report in February 2019. There was no substantial change from the October 2018 draft.
- Findings follow the impactor pays framework. Any increase in Rural and WAMC charges will be worked through the coming Determinations.

#### **4.4 Regulatory Economics – Pricing Determination Engagement Plans (J Dickson)**

##### **WAMC Determination**

- The current WAMC determination runs 2016-2020, with functions split between DoIW, NRAR and WaterNSW. On the current timetable, new pricing submissions are due by 30 June 2019 by each agency.
- WRAP recommendations delayed separation of duties and responsibilities, however outline of division of duties between agencies has now been agreed.
- Formal engagement on pricing options is planned for May 2019 and WaterNSW proposes to engage with customers in each valley throughout May.

##### **Rural Valleys Determination**

- The Rural Valleys Determination runs from 2017-2021, with submissions due to IPART 30 June 2020.
- WaterNSW will be seeking customer involvement in price modelling in early 2019. Engagement will follow the CAG format, with additions as required.

#### **4.5 iWAS Update (J Dickson)**

##### **iWAS Improvements**

- Coming soon: apportioning usage by Licence/Works; easier access to iWAS information for customers; carryover forecast by account; amending water orders within lead times.

##### **Carryover Campaign**

- WaterNSW's carryover campaign was a huge success last year with strong customer feedback on saving them on forfeiture. WaterNSW will run the campaign again this year, with new functionality in iWAS showing potential carryover.

##### **Ordering water – amending orders within lead time**

- An issue was identified with iWAS only allowing users to order, amend or cancel a water order during business hours. There is an opportunity within iWAS to enable users to amend orders out of hours **within lead time** window to ensure water take has a compliant order. This will be trialled in the Lachlan valley and if successful will be rolled out to all valleys.

#### **4.6 Your WaterNSW Bill (J Dickson)**

- In response to customer feedback, WaterNSW has updated the look and feel of our bill (invoice). We have sought to make understanding invoices easier and summarised charges on one page.
- **New on our website:** you can now access Algal Alerts, operational update notices and supplementary notices from our website homepage. Customers can register to receive specific alerts at [waternsw.com.au/supply/regional-nsw/alerts-and-updates](http://waternsw.com.au/supply/regional-nsw/alerts-and-updates)

#### **4.7 CAG Term of Office (J Dickson)**

- The current term of office for all CAGs expires on 30 June 2019. WaterNSW is calling for nominations for the 2019-22 term during February and March 2019.

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- If you wish to continue your representation on the CAG, please liaise with your nominating organisation to register your interest. Nominations close **29 March 2019** and a nomination form has been sent to your nominating organisation.

**5. Business Papers:**

- Noted and taken as read.

**6. General Business**

- Nil general business raised.

**Meeting Review and Close**

**Next Meeting :** Thursday 1 August 2019

**Meeting closed:** 12.45pm

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## Murrumbidgee Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 28 March 2019

### Carried forward actions

Action No.	Action	Responsibility	Status
<b>MBG1803.03</b>	WaterNSW to put together a proposal/process for equitable sharing of supplementary events between specific licence types and on what basis it can be done.	V Kelly	<b>Ongoing.</b>
<b>MBG1809.01</b>	WaterNSW to provide historical information on the losses in the Murrumbidgee valley to customers out of session.	V Kelly	<b>Complete.</b> Refer to presentation at agenda item 2.1
<b>MBG1809.02</b>	WaterNSW to provide a breakdown of operational losses in Operations Plans going forward.	M Barratt	<b>Complete (project ongoing).</b> A project has commenced to investigate this, however the detail required by valley is significant and complex. This will be a longer-term project (refer to agenda item 2.4).
<b>MBG1811.01</b>	WaterNSW to amend Murrumbidgee Operations Plan in relation to losses at Darlot and upload to the website.	V Kelly	<b>Complete.</b>

### New actions

Action No.	Action	Responsibility	Status
	Nil new actions.		

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