

**Barwon-Darling Customer Advisory Group
Minutes of Meeting
Thursday 21 September 2017
WaterNSW, Blueridge Business Park
7 Commercial Avenue, Dubbo**

Present: Tim Hosking, Ian Cole, Peter Brown, Reece Wilson, Terry Smith, Julie McClure, Bill Murray, Paul Maisey, Jeff Sowiak (observer), Justin McClure (observer), David Stockler, Jonathan Dickson, Susi Curtis, Craig Cahill and Toni Hayes (minutes).

Andrew Fraser attended via Skype for agenda item 8.4.

Graham Begg attended via Skype for agenda item 8.5.

Meeting Opened: 9.30am.

1. Welcome and Introductions

- Members welcomed and provided a brief introduction.
- I Cole advised that Barwon-Darling Water was previously called Mungindi-Menindee Advisory Council and was the forum customers previously communicated with state-based water agencies in the past.

2. Apologies: David Wheatley, Anthony Barlow, Ross Earl, Michael Boyd, Bruce Coward, Paul Keyte, Lachlan Gall.

3. Confirmation of Agenda Items & Declaration of Interest(s)

- Declarations of interest were sought from attendees in relation to the meeting's agenda items. No interests were declared. All items included in the agenda are not considered confidential unless declared as such.

4. CAG Member Introduction/Information

Presentations by J Dickson (attached)

4.1 CAG Roles & Responsibilities

- Roles, responsibilities and scope of CAGs and CAG members going forward presented and discussed. A key component of CAG member role is to provide feedback to constituents.
- WaterNSW provided members with background of transfer of some functions from DPIW to WaterNSW from 1 July 2016.
- WaterNSW will meet with CAGs face to face a minimum of twice per year. Schedule of first round of meetings for 2018 provided.

4.2 CAG Member Documentation/Claims

- WaterNSW is adopting more efficient ways to collect data. Internet link emailed to all members seeking completion of personal and banking details in July 2017.
- After each CAG meeting attendees will receive an email requesting feedback, which includes the opportunity to submit a claim for sitting fees and mileage.

5. Meeting Background (history of CSCs)

- WaterNSW provided a history of former-CSCs, what the meetings typically covered, including water operations, water market reform, customer service improvements and pricing (seeking feedback on submission, suggestions for options for pricing).

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6. Elections

6.1 Election of Chair

- Nominations for the position of Chair were called, with I Cole nominated by B Murray/P Brown (carried). No further nominations received.
- I Cole was appointed to the position of Chair.

6.2 Election of Customer Advisory Group Representative

- Nominations were called for the position of CAG Representative. I Cole, as elected Chair, accepted the position.

7. Water Delivery

7.1 Water System Operations

- WaterNSW website discussed, including water information (hydrometrics) transferring to WaterNSW. WaterNSW advised that it is doing a state-wide review of all gauging stations to ascertain what we have and what we require. The review is about optimising the functions of the gauging stations, which may include some rationalisation and/or additional stations, however WaterNSW will be engaging with customers throughout the process.
- With the majority of licensing moving to WaterNSW, customers questioned whether they will continue to receive usage statements. WaterNSW advised that previously we were a service provider for DPIW, however now we are in charge of this function it is important for us to hear what our customers want.

Action BD1709.01: *Confirm if customers in the Barwon-Darling will receive usage statements.*

Responsibility: D Stockler

- WaterNSW is in the process of rolling out a new billing system. We are trying to make information more readily available to customers by increasing opportunities for customers to access information when they want it.
- Discussed metering recommendations in the Matthews report. Customers believe the current service is dysfunctional. The time and event meters (meter of record) are not accessible to customers therefore usage statements would be beneficial. WaterNSW has written to the Matthews enquiry around a number of factual inaccuracies in the report.

Action BD1709.02: *WaterNSW to provide catchment area map of the Barwon-Darling CAG to members out of session.*

Responsibility: T Hayes

- C Cahill presented a water system operations overview (attached), including background of the Water System Operations group and what the business unit does. Historically, the group is the system operator for all regulated rivers in NSW tasked with matching supply and demand, optimising system operations, coordinating extreme event management and undertaking valley resource assessments and water availability for DPIW.
- The team is also involved with stakeholder engagement around current and future system operations, developing and communicating valley specific operational plans, delivering environmental water, undertaking replenishment and stock and domestic flows, developing operating protocols and managing supplementary and unregulated flow events.
- WaterNSW sought feedback from customers on what LOS they want in relation to flow management and system information. Discussed options as presented, including status quo.
- The Commonwealth Environmental Water Office (CEWO) provided information on how the CEWO works across both the unregulated and regulated systems and advised that maintaining the status quo in the unregulated system has a few problems, in that

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transparency is not available. Customers agreed that transparency is important to give people confidence in the system. Discussed.

Action BD1709.03: *WaterNSW to provide additional information on the proposed LOS options for more managed event access.*

Responsibility: C Cahill

8. Presentations/Consultation

8.1 Regulatory Reform

Discussed by D Stockler

Water Resource Plans (WRPs)

- Whilst WaterNSW is not charged with development of WSPs and WRPs we are an interested and significant stakeholder as the system operator. We have a vested interest in ensuring the rules can be operationalised and participate on the Stakeholder Advisory Panels (SAP) in each valley.
- WaterNSW's submissions on the status and issues paper are available on the website at www.waternsw.com.au/supply/regional-nsw/water-sharing-plans. The DPI process hasn't made submissions public however in some valleys customers agreed to share submissions with each other and WaterNSW. If customers are interested in sharing submissions, please email to Toni Hayes who will distribute to all members.
- WaterNSW continues to meet with DPI monthly. Significant feedback has been received from customers indicating the WRP process has been slow and level of detail is inadequate. Customers are dissatisfied with the level of engagement. WaterNSW has relayed this to DPI and continues to follow up and pursue monthly.
- Concurrence discussed around some of the rules in the Barwon-Darling system.
- Customers noted that with current saturation of consultation happening on a number of issues by a number of different agencies there is a lot of confusion in the community around who does what, which has led to the community being apathetic.
- Customers noted they are tired of going to meetings (ie SAP) to discuss WRPs without any action being taken.

Investigation of Allegations of Illegal Pumping Activity

- As a result of the recent Four Corners program, five independent enquiries have been identified (none of which are directed at WaterNSW). As WaterNSW has carriage of former-DPI compliance functions, we are providing assistance as required to the Ken Matthews enquiry.
- A preliminary report on the Ken Matthews enquiry was released on 31 August, with follow up report due November.
- WaterNSW stresses that no convictions or prosecutions have been made, only allegations at this point.
- There has been a recommendation for the establishment of a new Natural Resource Access Regulator within the Department of Industry. Customers questioned where this cost will come from. WaterNSW advised that this may involve transferring functions from one department to another, not necessarily duplication of functions. Will need further rationalisation.

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8.2 Voice of Customer Framework

Presentation by J Dickson (attached)

- WaterNSW is launching its Online Community in October which is a connection to a digital network of WaterNSW customers. CAG members will be automatically registered to this information sharing and gathering network and will receive an email confirmation once the platform is live.
- A registration link was emailed to CAG members to share with their constituents so that the Online Community can grow and provide benefit to our customers.
- A communications preferences survey will be sent to registered customers so WaterNSW can understand the type of information customers want and to ensure the platform fits your needs.
- WaterNSW uses Twitter as one of our communication platforms to keep customers informed and encourages customers to follow WaterNSW.

8.3 Customer Communications

Customer Service Charter

- WaterNSW is revising its Customer Service Charter to reflect additional responsibilities taken over from the Regulator, including customer contact; licensing, regulation and dealings; water delivery, ordering and reporting; and information and communication.
- Overview of end-of-call survey results provided (July 2017).

CIMS/WaterNSW Phone System Update

- WaterNSW is upgrading its telephony platform to enable customers to make contact through multiple avenues (eg phone, IM, SMS etc). Currently assessing options, with expected implementation early 2018.

8.4 Levels of Service (LOS)

Presentation by A Fraser via Skype (attached)

- WaterNSW is undertaking a LOS project in order to develop customer supported long-term infrastructure plans. The project will be implemented over the next two years and covers regulated assets only. The project was developed for the regulated system 18 months ago however we are getting a lot of interest from groundwater and unregulated customers.
- The model will determine existing LOS (baseline) and customers' future needs. Customers can influence future LOS performance based on desired service levels. Where there is a gap, WaterNSW will provide a suite of options and determine pricing impacts to aid customer choice.
- Purpose of LOS framework and examples of regulated LOS parameters presented and discussed. There are three aspects to the project - assets, operations and communications. We need to look at all 9 parameters to identify what the priorities are.
- While the project currently relates to the regulated system, the framework will be the same for the unregulated system. We want customers to be aware of the framework and approach we are taking. WaterNSW is aware of the differences in different parts of the state and what is relevant and there is a lot more work to do.
- WaterNSW has been on a 12-month journey with customers across the state. Customers have asked for greater transparency on expenditure and we are taking a business-wide approach to see what is of value to customers.
- Customers noted that there are very different views along the system. The top of the system is very different to the bottom of the system. Questioned if this CAG should include Lower Darling customers. WaterNSW advised that Lower Darling customers are involved in the

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Murray-Lower Darling CAG. Where relevant topics occur, CAG members are welcome to attend the relevant meeting.

8.5 Local Water Utility (LWU) Review

Presentation by G Begg via Skype (attached)

- The LWU Monitoring Review is a new WaterNSW Operating Licence obligation, instigated by NSW Health, due by December 2018.
- The focus of the initiative is to explore what role WaterNSW can play in terms of mitigating risk to LWUs for town drinking water supply in the regulated system.
- Currently developing the project plan which will be shared with LWUs and the CAGs over the coming 18 months.
- Customers questioned the relevance of presenting to the unregulated system. WaterNSW recognises that issues, concerns and relevance will be different across the state however we have one Operating Licence and have an obligation to consult with all CAGs. While this may not directly apply to the Barwon-Darling system, it will impact prices.

9. General Business

9.1 Metering/Monitoring

- Metering and monitoring discussed. Customers believe the service has declined and there is very little information getting back to users on accounts. Would like to see this improved.
- WaterNSW advised that DPIW (as the regulator) is in the process of putting out its draft Water Take Measurement Strategy for comment.
- WaterNSW is committed to a risk-based approach to meter reading which means smaller users may not require the same amount of meter reads as larger users. In this light WaterNSW does not commit to every meter being read 4 times per year.
- In the last pricing determination, WaterNSW put up that we would work with customers to separate meter reads (where costs are not socialised) from compliance (costs are socialised). WaterNSW is committed to compliance costs being socialised.
- Customers advised they would like regular readings on B and C class licences. There is an expectation in the community that irrigators know what water is being extracted.
- WaterNSW advised that in the past we read meters under an SLA for DPIW, who dictated what they wanted, to what standard and how much. Since 1 July 2016, WaterNSW has inherited this service from DPIW.

9.2 Fishways

- Walgett Weir discussed. Walgett Shire Council has sought funds from the government to raise the weir however this has triggered S218 of the Fisheries Act which requires a fishway to be installed. As the fishway strategy is currently on hold, customers questioned where the funding has gone.
- WaterNSW advised that there is currently no funding for fishways across NSW. As part of the WAMC pricing determination, there is no funding. As part of the rural pricing determination, WaterNSW has been in discussions with DPI Fisheries for some time to identify what is prudent and efficient fishway design.
- Bourke Weir is maintained by Bourke Shire Council who applies for funding for work to be done. Weirs on the Barwon-Darling system are for town water supply.
- WaterNSW confirmed there is a moratorium on increasing the size of weirs (above 50mm) where S218 of the Fisheries Act is triggered. This does not include maintenance work, which

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will continue to be done as required. Until a fishway strategy is in place, if works trigger S218 under the Fisheries Act, there is a requirement to install a fishway.

- Wilcannia Weir discussed. There is a community perception that WaterNSW is not there to assist and the community believes that WaterNSW should fulfil its obligation to build the weir. WaterNSW advised that we can build it, but the cost will go to customers. The issue is about finding a funding source.
- WaterNSW notes that it needs to communicate with customers more about what is being done to address fishways and how they are funded (50% government/50% user share for new build). Maintenance of weirs is user share – 100% funded by customers. Customers would like to see what they are paying for and what they are getting.

9.3 Financial Reporting

- Financial Reporting and visibility of expenditure discussed. WaterNSW advised that valley financial statements will be provided to the CAG as part of business papers for future meetings. Reports were not available for this meeting as reports didn't exist in the previous period and reporting is yet to be done for the first quarter, which is the first time revenue has come to WaterNSW.

9.4 Update on Carp Herpes Virus

- WaterNSW provided an update on the carp herpes virus study. The Water and Catchment Protection unit has been looking into a release of the virus as an event. Results of the trial have been shared with FRDC and DPI Fisheries who have taken into account in planning their own research program, which must be completed before any planned release can occur.
- WaterNSW is involved with a number of working groups and will continue to work closely with FRDC and DPI Fisheries to keep our stakeholders informed. We are also completing some further stages of research work to ensure any operational response minimises impact.

9.5 Broken Hill Pipeline Project

- Customers advised there is some unrest in the community about where costs are going when the pipeline is passed on to the operator. WaterNSW advised that it was directed by the government to build the pipeline and there will be another pricing determination for the pipeline and the asset which will determine the cost share. At the moment we are in the process of building it.
- Customers noted there has been no consultation and they are having trouble obtaining a copy of the business case. WaterNSW advised that the business case is Cabinet-In-Confidence, therefore not available.
- Continuity of supply discussed.

Meeting Review and Close

D Stockler thanked members for their interest and participation in the CAG and reiterated that WaterNSW is committed to the CAGs.

Next Meeting: Tuesday 13 March 2018

Meeting closed: 1.20pm

Barwon-Darling Customer Advisory Group - Actions – 21 September 2017

CURRENT ACTIONS			
Action No.	Action	Responsibility	Status
BD1709.01	Confirm if customers in the Barwon-Darling will receive usage statements.	D Stockler/D Starr	
BD1709.02	WaterNSW to provide catchment area map of the Barwon-Darling CAG to members out of session.	T Hayes	COMPLETE. Attached.
BD1709.03	WaterNSW to provide additional information on the proposed LOS options for more managed event access.	C Cahill	