

# Namoi-Peel Customer Advisory Group - Minutes of Meeting



**Location:** The Crossing Theatre, Tibbereena St, NARRABRI

**Date:** 14 March 2019

**Time:** 9.30am

**Present:** David Phelps (Chair), David Gowing, Ian Coxhead, Tom Woolaston, Andrew Watson, Darren Raeck, Brendon Warnock, Jon Baker, Jason Wilson (observer), Ildu Monticone (observer), David Stockler, Jonathan Dickson, Adrian Langdon, Andrew Scott, Mahmudul Haque, Enrico Proietti, Emma Oates and Toni Hayes (minutes).

Ron Walker attended via Skype for agenda item 3.1.

**Meeting Opened:** 9.30am.

## 1. Welcome and introductions:

### 1.1 Confirmation of Agenda Items

- Additional agenda items tabled at General Business.

### 1.2 Apologies

- Bruce Logan, Paul Keyte, Jono Phelps, Lindsay White.

### 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, 23 August 2018

- Resolved the minutes of meeting held on 23 August 2018 be confirmed as a correct record. Taken as read.

*I Coxhead/T Woolaston  
carried*

### 1.5 Actions arising from minutes

- See action sheet attached.

## 2. Water Delivery:

### 2.1 Water System Operations Report (A Scott)

- WaterNSW presented the operations plan for the Namoi and Peel valleys, 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).
- Namoi Water questioned if there is an expectation that Peel water users will use remaining account balances. Is essential that customers have an understanding of remaining volumes in accounts and if irrigators intend to use. I Monticone indicated it is his understanding the balance will be used. WaterNSW advised it has held roadshows and had engagement in the Peel in relation to drought operations.

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- Customers questioned if WaterNSW supports the suspension of the WSP. Critical of Tamworth Regional Council not putting restrictions on supply until the dam reached 60%. WaterNSW advised that the plan hasn't been suspended but there have been some restrictions put on general security in some areas. We are looking at town water supply and high security and working with customers as required. There is 2 years supply for town water and high security in the dam.
- BWT discussed. Was a limited volume which meant allocation was cut. From a Lower Namoi water users' perspective, questions are being raised that water in GS accounts could have been delivered.
- Customers noted multiple attempts to get water to Walgett were unsuccessful and could have been managed better with more consultation and planning to get flows. WaterNSW advised plans are underway to set up river management committees to make recommendations and provide advice as the drought continues and we are working with Councils to assist.
- Operational surplus discussed. There are some challenges in the Peel with water ordering behaviour and people taking water without an order, which is causing shortfalls downstream. Customers queried whether compliance action will be taken and if customers are aware they are in breach if they don't have a compliant water order in place. WaterNSW advised that more education is needed to ensure Peel customers are aware they are required to place a compliant order and we will work closely with customers to achieve better outcomes.
- Delivery delays discussed. WaterNSW advised it is trialling a system in the Lachlan within iWAS that will enable users to amend orders out of hours within lead time window to ensure water take has a compliant order (refer to agenda item 4.5). Discussed.

## 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. The Namoi is operating under stage 4 (critical drought) and the Peel is operating under stage 2-3 (emerging/severe drought).
- **Current situation:** Namoi, Border Rivers, Gwydir and Macquarie system inflows vs water allocations graphs for the last 10 years presented and discussed. The key message WaterNSW is emphasising is this is a six-year drought, not a two-year drought. Extractive users have been allocated minimal water during this time (16% in the Namoi).
- Balonne flows upstream of St George; Barwon-Darling vs Menindee Lakes inflows; Barwon-Darling extraction vs inflows presented.
- **Situation at Menindee:** 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 River flows and Menindee Lakes storage operations and volumes; distribution of water July 2016-January 2019 presented.
- **Why are we in this situation:** NSW rainfall and temperature graphs and comparison of drought inflows (Keepit, Split Rock, Pindari, Glenlyon, Copeton and Burrendong dams) presented.
- Customers questioned whether WaterNSW has followed up the commitment for the public interest test. As stakeholders, they want transparency and agreement on the public interest test. WaterNSW advised that 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.

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- To support local input for the CWAP meetings, WaterNSW intends to form local panels 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 formed by DoIW. WaterNSW will establish these groups based on the severity of conditions, as drought extends through the state.
- Further information is available on WaterNSW's website at [waternsw.com.au/supply/drought-information](http://waternsw.com.au/supply/drought-information)
- Customers queried if WaterNSW can include allocation vs usage graphs in the presentation. WaterNSW is looking at this, however the information could be skewed because of carryover (allocated one year but used 18 months later).
- Customers noted that mining extraction is a significant portion of water use – the data says 1% of resource, but customers believe the percentage of take is higher. WaterNSW advised it has spoken to the mines and we will look at the data.

### **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.
- Customers provided the following suggestions for inclusion: trades; groundwater, in particular rolling averages (WaterNSW is working with DoIW to work out where this best sits to ensure is complementary); usage by valley by class by river section.
- Discussion on the functions of CARM and where WaterNSW sees the benefits being delivered to customers in the valley. Customers would like to discuss further at the next meeting.
- 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.

### **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.
- Customers can subscribe to weekly updates at [waternsw.com.au/customer-service/news/subscribe](http://waternsw.com.au/customer-service/news/subscribe).

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### 3. Assets

#### 3.1 Asset Maintenance and Services Update (R Walker)

- Asset performance and maintenance in the Namoi and Peel valleys presented and discussed, including safety improvements, asset performance, maintenance delivery 2018/19, breakdown/defects and other items of note.
- Customers queried what repair work was done at Mollee and if work was under warranty. WaterNSW advised that when Mollee was upgraded, a jam occurred in the rotork actuator. Work was done under warranty by Geotech, including upgrading shafts and reinstalling brackets.
- On completion of the upgrade, some access issues for the maintenance team were identified which are not part of the original contract/design of the fishway. A decision on what work will be done has not been finalised, therefore no costings are available at this stage.

### 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.
- Customers questioned how payments are made to ICDs and PIDs around shared WALs. WaterNSW provided an explanation as to how these payments are made and discussions that are currently occurring in this area. The decision was made by the government to pay the rebate at the licence level, not at the WAL level.

#### 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)

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- **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.

#### **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.
- Customers queried if apportioning will be available for groundwater and would like this included if not already. Would allow users more flexibility.

**Action NP1903.01:** WaterNSW to advise if apportioning usage by licence/works in iWAS will be available for groundwater.

*Responsibility: J Dickson*

- High cost of groundwater trades discussed. WaterNSW advised that it is working on something to put in the WAMC pricing proposal. We are looking at options, however are mindful that there may be fees for hydrological assessments etc.
- Customers advised that the process to correct a number entered wrong in iWAS is rigorous and suggested adding an “undo” button. Currently customers need to phone the operator/CFO if an incorrect number is entered.

##### **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.

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## 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 trialed in the Lachlan valley and if successful will be rolled out to all valleys.
- Customers are very supportive of this initiative. WaterNSW is looking at how to increase notification/communication around supplementary events and how supplementary orders are done in iWAS.

## 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.
- 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.
- Customers questioned figures presented in the OPEX report for Customer Billing. \$126K budget, spent \$122K YTD – will the budget be increased? WaterNSW advised that overspend in OPEX has no impact to customer prices as prices are set. An overrun is at the risk of WaterNSW. The only price risk to customers is where there is an overspend on capital and whether the Regulator allows this to enter the RAB.

## 6. General Business

### 6.1 Fish Passage Strategy

- Customers questioned if there is a timeframe for the new fish passage strategy to be resolved and presented to customers. WaterNSW advised that the interagency fish passage task force is continuing to meet. There is still work being done on this and how it gets funded, but as yet there are no timeframes or costs available. Recent events that have taken place have provided increased cadence with getting a result.

**Action NP1903.02:** Provide information on the credit for Walgett Weir Fishway (item 1346) in the CAPEX report (\$14K).

Responsibility: M Clayton

**Action NP1903.03:** Provide information on the expenditure for Keepit Fish Passage Offsets (item 2123) in the CAPEX report (\$138K).

Responsibility: M Clayton

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## Meeting Review and Close

**Next Meeting :** Thursday 25 July 2019

**Meeting closed:** 1.20pm

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## Namoi-Peel Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 14 March 2019

### Carried forward actions

| Action No. | Action   | Responsibility  | Status   |
|------------|--|-----------------|--|
| NP1808.03  | WaterNSW to provide feedback and updates on dam wall debiting in the Namoi to D Phelps out of session. | D Berry/A Scott | <p><b>Ongoing.</b></p> <p>D Phelps wrote to WaterNSW on 13 March 2019 seeking dam wall debiting be reinstated in the Namoi asap. Is a long-standing issue that has been raised at the CSC/CAG for a number of years that is yet to be resolved.</p> <p>The process was changed without consultation and has consequences for customers. Customers want WaterNSW to honour the system that was originally set up for continuous accounting in the Namoi. Stated that costs and regulatory issues given by WaterNSW as the reason for not reinstating the system is inadequate.</p> <p>WaterNSW advised that it was instructed to make the changes by DPI as the regulator in 2014. Water was to be accounted for at time of take, which has had unintended consequences.</p> <p><b>Action NP1903.04:</b> WaterNSW to set up a meeting with D Phelps in the next month to discuss dam wall debiting issues and seek a resolution.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Responsibility: T Hayes</i></p> |

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**New actions**

| <b>Action No.</b> | <b>Action</b>   | <b>Responsibility</b> | <b>Status</b>  |
|-------------------|---|-----------------------|--|
| NP1903.01         | WaterNSW to advise if apportioning usage by licence/works in iWAS will be available for groundwater.                    | J Dickson             |  |
| NP1903.02         | Provide information on the credit for Walgett Weir Fishway (item 1346) in the CAPEX report (\$14K).                     | M Clayton             |  |
| NP1903.03         | Provide information on the expenditure for Keepit Fish Passage Offsets (item 2123) in the CAPEX report (\$138K).        | M Clayton             |  |
| NP1903.04         | WaterNSW to set up a meeting with D Phelps in the next month to discuss dam wall debiting issues and seek a resolution. | T Hayes               | <b>Complete.</b><br>A meeting has been arranged for 10 April 2019. |

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