

# Gwydir Customer Advisory Group

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**Minutes of Meeting  
Thursday 1 March 2018  
WaterNSW Conference Room  
66-68 Frome St, Moree**

**Present:** Joe Robinson (Chair), Nathaniel Phillis, David Reibel, Jim Cush, Sam Heagney, Mark Winter, Roland Heatley, Michael Seery, Daryl Albertson, Alex Norman (observer), David Preston (observer), Paul Maisey (Skype), Jonathan Dickson, Ken Gee, Andrew Fraser, Pouya Amirsayafi, Chris Braddock, Sonia Townsend and Toni Hayes (minutes).

Ronan Magarahan attended via Skype for agenda item 7.1.

**Meeting Opened:** 9.00am.

**Welcome and introductions.**

- 1. Apologies:** Zara Lowien, Nick Gillingham, David Stockler.

*M Winter/M Seery  
accepted*

- 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, 29 August 2017:**

- Resolved the minutes of meeting held on 29 August 2017 be confirmed as a correct record. Taken as read.

*M Winter/J Cush  
carried*

- 5. Actions arising from minutes:**

- See action sheet attached.

- 6. Water Delivery**

- 6.1 Water System Operations Report (K Gee)**

- WaterNSW provided an update on the water system operations report, including a flood update – <http://www.waternsw.com.au/customer-service/news/operations>
- Customers queried if volume of supplementary water taken over the last 6-7 years can be included in the water delivery presentation going forward as would be valuable in terms of planning and long term averages (history). WaterNSW suggested this information could be provided to GVIA separate to the water delivery presentations.
- Operational losses discussed. Operational surplus is water above that which could reasonably be expected (a flow about 20ML/day) to pass the last extraction point on each given river/creek being supplied with regulated flow (does not include supplementary flows).

- D Albertson advised that if stimulus triggers are reached in July/August that OEH may need to make deliveries during that period for fish outcomes (outside block release periods). WaterNSW advised that provided releases meet conditions (as per all licences) this can be considered if required. For discussion when/if relevant.

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

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

- Asset performance and maintenance in the Gwydir valley presented and discussed.

## **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. The Customer feedback received will inform our feedback to the regulator as part of our submission.
- Customers queried if rules around pattern approved meters would apply retrospectively. WaterNSW advised that this would be up to the rule maker.
- There has been some movement with the regulator in recent times with significant improvement in the SAP process and water take is back on the agenda (WaterNSW anticipates customers will see something in the next month or so).
- Customers expressed frustration with little information available in defence of compliance in the northern valleys and lack of understanding among some customers in the south of the differences between the systems. Suggested WaterNSW attend a NSW Irrigators' Council (NSWIC) meeting and highlight there is minimal theft in the northern systems. Information needs to be put into perspective to educate southern users on how the system works. If NSWIC extends an invitation to WaterNSW, this can be considered.
- Pattern approval and metering discussed. WaterNSW understands there are many challenges around the rules and many are hard to achieve, and we have raised this with the regulator. A lot has been happening behind the scenes and WaterNSW is putting together a submission for the metering process. Once more is known around the timeframe we will likely have a meeting with Chairs to gather more information/feedback.

**Action GWY1803.01:** Question on Notice: is the Natural Resource Access Regulator (NRAR) the body doing compliance on all natural resources?

Responsibility: J Dickson

## 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.
- WaterNSW has recently launched “Your Voice”, a platform for customers to 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 completed in December 2017.

### Conditions Mailout

- On behalf of DOI Water, WaterNSW engaged an external call centre to capture and log queries, which are then allocated to a locally-based Licensing Officer for review/discussion with customers. Given the volume and complexity of conditions across all WSPs, it is unlikely the WaterNSW call centre could cover the scope of all enquiries.
- Licence holders have 28 days to lodge a submission regarding any “discretionary/other” conditions.
- Customers have already identified some issues with the conditions that have already been sent out in some valleys. Gwydir valley letters should be received within the next 3 weeks and customers are encouraged to lodge any issues identified with the conditions to DOI Water within 28 days of receiving the letters.

## 8.4 Levels of Service (LOS) Project Update (P Amirsayafi)

- Project status update presented and discussed. Formal customer engagement commenced this week with Lachlan CAG members, with a workshop for Gwydir 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.
- Potential options discussed. Any project would depend on how the rules around the Water Sharing Plans tie in.

## 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. Discussed. 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 Gwydir valley presented and discussed, including forecast; completed projects; projects in progress; new projects; minor renewals; and candidate projects.

### **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.
- Customers noted that toolkit measures and SDL adjustments will likely be off the table. Discussed. Even if NSW and Victoria don't walk away, toolkit measures will remain unfunded.

### **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.
- Copeton Dam is the most difficult dam to install something in terms of multi-level offtake as has no intake tower (is 20m deep in the water). WaterNSW is investigating a number of options and will do a cost/benefit analysis to ascertain if there is a benefit to the whole valley so can progress if funding becomes available. Need to look at long term options. Currently at a very high level. Discussed.
- Customers noted that a study was done in the past by the then State Water Corporation, so there should already be a lot of data on CWP options at Copeton Dam. WaterNSW acknowledged customer frustrations and that this issue has been around for some time, however WaterNSW is in a better position than its predecessor to do the strategic work required. We want a strategy in place for when/if funding becomes available and are committed to achieving an outcome.

**Action GWY1803.02:** *Question on Notice: will customers get to see the draft CWP strategy prior to going to the Board for endorsement? OEH would like to see intentions of strategy prior to any finalisation?*

*Responsibility: A Fraser*

### **Burrendong Temperature Curtain Update (C Braddock)**

- 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 suggested including a box to indicate if a trade is non-commercial (therefore will be a zero dollar trade).

### **9. Reports**

Noted and taken as read.

## 10. General Business

### 10.1 Compliance (D Albertson)

- Concerns were raised regarding compliance issues in the Mallowa and inability of environmental water managers to manage their sites. Has been an ongoing issue for some time that is yet to be resolved. Discussed.
- Noted. WaterNSW cannot comment on compliance activity and the Customer Advisory Group is not the correct forum to discuss detail on any compliance action.

### Meeting Review and Close

**Next Meetings:** Tuesday 5 June 2018 (Skype)  
Thursday 30 August 2018 (Moree)

**Meeting closed:** 1.00pm

Carried Forward Actions			
Action No. yymm.action no	Action	Responsibility	Status
<b>GWY1708.01</b>	WaterNSW to provide additional information on the sinkhole at Boolooroo Weir (including location, proposed action, risk, where has the dirt gone etc).	R Magarahan	<b>Complete.</b> The sinkhole has been repaired and monitored and no further issues have been identified. Engineers have assessed and the weir is operating as normal.
<b>GWY1708.02</b>	WaterNSW to respond to GVIA letter sent early August requesting updated estimate of meter fleet standard in the north.	D Stockler/D Starr	This information is being compiled and will be provided on our website for all customers to access. We will advise once published.
<b>GWY1711.01</b>	Provide information on WaterNSW's proposed customer engagement strategy on the final Matthews' report.	J Dickson	<b>Complete.</b> Refer to agenda item 8.1.
New Actions			
Action No. yymm.action no	Action	Responsibility	Status
<b>GWY1803.01</b>	Question on Notice: is the Natural Resource Access Regulator (NRAR) the body doing compliance on all natural resources?	J Dickson	For more information on NRAR, see the link below: <a href="https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/natural-resources-access-regulator">https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/natural-resources-access-regulator</a>
<b>GWY1803.02</b>	Question on Notice: will customers get to see the draft CWP strategy prior to going to the Board for endorsement? OEH would like to see intentions of strategy prior to any finalisation.	A Fraser	Update to be provided at next meeting.