

Macquarie-Cudgegong Customer Advisory Group - Minutes of Meeting



Location: Video Conference

Date: 1 July 2020

Time: 9.30am

Present: Lyn Davies (Chair), Tony Quigley, Michael Bennett, Rob Tuck, Peter Schuster, Simon Earl, Jason Wilson, Bill Tyrwhitt, Frank McKillop, Paul Keyte, Claire Cam, David Frith, Michael Drum (observer), David Stockler, Jonathan Dickson, Toni Hayes, Sri Sritharan, Mahmood Khan, David Swift-Hoadley, Douglas Juma, Michael Smith, Anne-Maree Burke, Erin Brown, Emma Oates and Enrico Proietti.

The following staff attended for specific agenda items: D Berry (2.2/2.3), A Fisher (3.2), A Lavelle (3.3), B Mayhew (4.1), C Braddock (4.2).

Meeting Opened: 9.30am.

1. Introduction:

1.1 Welcome and introductions

1.2 Apologies: Rick Reid, Greg Murie, Chris Hogendyk, Lindsay White, Garry Hemsworth, Michael Sutherland, Tim Hosking

1.3 Confirmation of Agenda Items

1.4 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.

1.5 Minutes of Previous Meeting, 26 February 2020:

– Resolved the minutes of meeting held on 26 February 2020 be confirmed as a correct record. Taken as read.

*M Bennett/R Tuck
carried*

1.6 Actions arising from minutes

– See action sheet attached.

2. Water Delivery:

2.1 Water Delivery and Operations Update (S Sritharan)

– WaterNSW presented an operations update for the Macquarie and Cudgegong valleys, including recent rainfall, current storages status, principles for managing tributary flows, S&D replenishment, comparison of drought inflows, water account summary, storage depletion curves, transmission and operation losses, river operations, drought contingency measures, water availability and resource distribution.

– Resource Distribution discussed. Members requested this information be made available for groundwater as soon as possible and presented at CAGs going forward. WaterNSW has

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appointed a dedicated staff member to look after groundwater and this information will be provided in future. Groundwater will also be added to the Water Insights portal (refer agenda item 2.3).

Action MC2007.01: WaterNSW to provide most recent groundwater resource distribution reports (for upper and lower Macquarie) ASAP to Macquarie-Cudgegong CAG members out of session.

Responsibility: S Sritharan

Action MC2007.02: WaterNSW to provide groundwater resource distribution reports for Upper and Lower Macquarie in the Water System Operations presentation going forward.

Responsibility: S Sritharan

- For information on the Macquarie valley, including water availability reports and drought reports, visit www.watersw.com.au/supply/drought-information/regional-nsw/macquarie-valley

2.2 Active Management Update (D Berry)

- WaterNSW presented an overview of Active Management, which is being implemented in unregulated systems in the Barwon-Darling, Gwydir and Macquarie Bogan valleys to ensure held environmental flows travel downstream. These water systems have unique environmental elements and wetlands and existing access rules do not adequately benefit the environment.
- The Commonwealth and NSW Government have bought water in these unregulated systems to further protect environmental water when releases are made from regulated systems.
- From 1 July 2020 the amended water sharing plans for these unregulated water sources come into effect and will include rules for active management, so that releases of held environmental water remain in the river to achieve intended environmental outcomes.
- New rules for active management, resumption of flow rules, Individual Daily Extraction Components (IDEC) and expression of interest presented and discussed.
- Active Management commenced in the Barwon-Darling system on 1 July and will be implemented in the Gwydir and Macquarie Bogan systems from 1 December, noting that conditions notification to licence holders is planned in the coming months to enliven the clauses.
- Detailed information about the environmental water reforms and what it means be found at the environmental water hub www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/environmental-water-hub

2.3 WaterInsights Portal Update (D Berry)

- The WaterInsights Portal is an initiative by WaterNSW where customers can view 66 water sources from the 14 valleys, the Barwon-Darling and an initial group of groundwater and surface water sources in the Murrumbidgee region.
- The portal incorporates current data and curated information including water availability information, storage and release information, gauged flow and level data, operations updates and Annual Operations Plans, water availability reports and balances, notices of key operations information including outages and restrictions and links to other relevant reports.
- Information from the Murray Darling Basin Authority and DPIE's environmental holdings is also included.
- The portal can be accessed on WaterNSW's website at www.watersw.com.au/waterinsights/water-insights

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- Groundwater will be added to the portal in the future however is only in the early stages. WaterNSW will be seeking feedback from groundwater users on what to include and what information will be useful in terms of operations and transparency. Feedback can also be provided through the CAG (email toni.hayes@waternsw.com.au).

3. Presentations/Consultation:

3.1 Regulatory Economics – Pricing Determination Engagement (J Dickson)

Rural Determination:

- As discussed at previous meetings, members supported WaterNSW's proposal of a 2-year determination, locking in WaterNSW revenues at 20/21 levels (noting inflation), deferral of Customer Juries and adjusting the 20-year rolling average and IPART cost shares.
- The only change to these proposed principles in the Final Draft submitted to IPART is the change from a 2-year determination to a 1-year determination. During preparations with IPART it became clear a 2-year deferral would not be supported.

WAMC (Water Administration Ministerial Corporation) Determination:

- WaterNSW has heard broad consistency from customers on the key messages proposed around transparency (understanding what you are paying for across Agencies), cost reflectivity (paying a fair price reflective of the costs to deliver) and value for money (to provide least cost solutions).
- There is no change to these proposed principles in the Final Draft, which was submitted to IPART on 30 June 2020.
- NRAR and DPIE will make a joint submission to IPART, however there will be a single determination made for all Agencies.
- WaterNSW's submissions will be published as part of IPART's review process at www.ipart.nsw.gov.au

3.2 Major Projects Update (A Fisher)

- As previously advised, in October 2019 the Prime Minister and NSW Premier announced the planning and delivery of three new or augmented dams in NSW (Wyangala Dam raising, and construction of new dams on the Mole River and Dungowan Creek). The projects have been identified as Critical State Significant Infrastructure (CSSI) projects in the *Water Supply (Critical Needs) Act 2019*.
- The projects are focussed around drought resilience to provide significant improvement in water security and reliability, flood mitigation improvements downstream of Wyangala Dam and potential benefits to the Barwon-Darling system.
- Delivery timelines, project delivery models, current status, program challenges, key delivery milestones and community and stakeholder engagement presented and discussed.
- The projects have been fast-tracked with early works to commence October 2020 and main wall construction expected October 2021. There will be more detailed consultation with CAGs and community groups as the projects progress.

Western Weirs Update (A Fisher)

- The NSW Government has committed to funding the development of a strategic business case to look at holistic management and operation of the weirs in the Barwon-Darling unregulated and Lower Darling regulated systems to support remote community water supplies and environmental and other benefits.

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- The program has been identified as a CSSI Project (per previous agenda item) and is in the very early stages. Current status and key project delivery milestones presented and discussed.

Macquarie Re-Regulating Storage Update (A Lavelle)

- Project overview and progress presented and discussed. Key updates include:
 - detailed concept design is due for completion August 2020
 - EIS assessments in progress, due for exhibition early 2021
 - Consultation for Final Business Case closing for completion July 2020
 - Final business case draft due for completion late September 2020
- For more information on the project, please visit our website at <https://www.waternsw.com.au/projects/regional-nsw/macquarie-river-re-regulating-storage>

3.3 CAG/ROSCCo Update (J Dickson)

- During the last CAG round, members questioned the background of the ROSCCOs and why WaterNSW was holding 2 meetings when members previously gained the information they valued in the one meeting.
- Recent Government reports indicated that finding information on operational water issues is not easy for many community members. In response, WaterNSW has adapted the drought format of ROSCCOs as a means of reaching a wider audience, including local irrigators, large employers and water related businesses.
- WaterNSW surveyed ROSCCo attendees in recent meetings for feedback. There was broad acceptance that the ROSCCo is a useful forum to communicate river operations and education, incorporating broader community participation.
- WaterNSW has agreed that where possible, ROSCCo meetings will follow immediately after a CAG, however there will be times when they will not align due to operational requirements. When not aligned, a full and detailed water operations update will be provided at the CAG.
- Members stated that having to attend a full-day meeting when previously updated on operations in the CAG has an impact on members and requested that a brief operations report continue to be included on the CAG agenda so members do not have to attend both meetings.
- Members supported the inclusion of DPIE and NRAR in meetings when practical and noted that having other stakeholders involved in the ROSCCo forum adds to the conversation, albeit sometimes at a lower knowledge level to CAGs, thereby contributing to timeframes. Would be good to continue this going forward, however suggested a shorter timeframe after the CAG would be preferable.

3.4 Water Reform Implementation Plan (WRIP) Update (D Swift-Hoadley)

Metering update:

- The Water Renewal Taskforce was disbanded on 30 June 2020 with WaterNSW overseeing the operational implementation of the reform.
- Irrigation Australia has a list of certified meter installers on its website www.irrigationaustralia.com.au/ and WaterNSW has developed a DQP portal for Duly Qualified Persons to enter validation certification.
- There is a list of compatible data logging and telemetry devices (LIDs) and solutions on DPIE's website at <https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/metering/telemetry/list-of-compatible-data-logging-and->

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[telemetry-devices-and-solutions](#). WaterNSW's DAS (data acquisition service) is a cloud-based system to securely collect and store water usage data.

- New reporting and recording obligations are being introduced and updated work approval and licence conditions are being mailed out (refer agenda item 3.6).
- Customers should be aware that start dates for metering compliance still apply. Existing licence and approval conditions apply until the new dates come into effect.
- To be compliant, customers need to be aware of their compliance dates, understand their approval and obligation, engage a DQP to discuss options and lodge relevant certificates and understand their recording and reporting obligations.
- Members queried rules and verification around open flow meters. WaterNSW advised that the Taskforce has come up with a standard for closed conduit sites. A gap was identified in the market and is currently being reviewed, with the Australian Hydrographers' Association (AHA) in the process of having something available. The first step would be to contact the AHA. WaterNSW will continue to update the CAG as information becomes available.
- Members noted that MACE has advised it has discontinued its attempt to get pattern approved. This will be an issue in the Macquarie with around 50% of irrigators owning MACE meters.
- Further to this, there is confusion about grandfathering and the pathway to compliance for irrigators with MACE meters in relation to what is being accepted/available to use. WaterNSW advised that there has been a vendor delay with LIDs. There are currently 3 on the approved list and will be available in the next 2 weeks by the vendor. DQPs will be able to order through the DQP portal from mid-July. It is estimated there will be 1200 sites requiring this for 1 December.
- Regarding MACE, customers can adopt a pathway to compliance/pattern approval by ensuring you have a certification of compliance, validation from a DQP and meters will need to be tested in-situ for accuracy (+/-5%). Members highlighted that this is contrary to past advice where in-situ testing was not required. If this is the case, irrigators need to be advised immediately as many would be unaware of this requirement.

Action MC2007.03: WaterNSW to clarify pathway to compliance/pattern approval and provide to CAG members out of session.

Responsibility: D Swift-Hoadley

- We understand a letter is to be sent to every user explaining regulations and roll out dates, including pathway to pattern approval, in the next couple of weeks (by WaterNSW on behalf of DPIE).

3.5 Fixed Fee Rebate update (E Oates)

- The NSW Government has confirmed the fixed fee rebate will again be applied to WaterNSW invoices for approved users. WaterNSW continues to advocate for further rebates to assist those with no access to water.
- The rebate will be applied quarterly to bills for 2020/21, up to \$1000 per quarter for regulated, and on the annual bill for those customers applicable for unregulated and groundwater. Customers do not need to do anything in order to receive the rebate.
- For more information go to www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/droughthub

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3.6 WSP Conditions Notice (J Dickson)

- Conditions notifications are being prepared with DPIE to send notifications over the next few months (timeline presented).
- Formal notification is the trigger for the additional conditions to come into effect.

4. Assets:

4.1 Asset Maintenance Update (B Mayhew)

- Asset performance and maintenance in the Macquarie and Cudgegong valleys presented and discussed, including routine preventative and corrective maintenance delivery.

4.2 Rural Pricing Submissions: FY22 & FY23-26 Capital Plans (C Braddock)

- As discussed at agenda item 3.1, IPART has indicated that a 1-year deferral is required, so there will be a 1-year Pricing Submission for FY22 (due 30 June 2020) followed by a 4-year Pricing Submission for FY23-26 (due 30 June 2021).
- The FY22 project detail will include the commencement of design and planning of three DSU Fishway Offsets at Gin Gin Weir, Dubbo North and Marebone Break Weir.

5. Business Papers:

- Noted and taken as read.

6. General Business:

6.1 CEWO Water Management Plans

- The Commonwealth Environmental Water Office is finalising its annual environmental watering plans for the 2020/21 water year and will send the link to the website to CAG members in the near future.

Meeting Review and Close

Next Meeting: Wednesday 28 October 2020

Meeting closed: 12.15pm

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Macquarie-Cudgegong Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 1 July 2020

Carried forward actions

Action No.	Action	Responsibility	Status
MC1705.03	WaterNSW to look at costing of re-routing channel at Bulgeraga Creek.	R Magaharan	<p>Action complete, works ongoing (re-added to action sheet).</p> <p>June 2020 update:</p> <p>The preferred option is to bypass the existing alignment with a new channel on a generally straight alignment, positioned slightly to the west of the existing channel, for a length of approximately 600m downstream of the Bulgeraga Regulator.</p> <p>Cost estimates are being updated in consultation with local earthworks contractors who are familiar with this type of work.</p> <p>A decision to proceed will be subject to availability of funding within the Valley determination.</p>
MC1809.02	WaterNSW to report transmission loss by river section in Operations Plans going forward.	A Langdon (M Barratt)	Long-term project, ongoing.
MC1809.03	WaterNSW to decide on consistent terminology for Operations Plans for all reports on losses, that clearly breaks down system loss, WSP requirement flow, transmission loss and operational loss.	A Langdon (M Barratt)	Long-term project, ongoing.
MC1809.04	WaterNSW to advise if there are any long-term plans to address issues at Gin Gin weir which affect customers in low flow conditions.	R Magaharan	<p>Action complete, works ongoing.</p> <p>There are plans in place to block the lower scour valve when water levels permit. This should keep the weir pool at a higher level during periods of low flows.</p> <p>June 2020 update:</p> <p>There is no change since the February update, with water still over the crest. For works to safely commence, the water needs to drop below crest level.</p> <p>The future of the weir will form part of the Macquarie-Re-Regulating Storage Project https://www.watensw.com.au/projects/regional-nsw/macquarie-river-re-regulating-storage</p>

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New actions

Action No.	Action	Responsibility	Status
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MC2007.02	WaterNSW to provide groundwater resource distribution reports for Upper and Lower Macquarie in the Water System Operations presentation going forward.	S Sritharan	
MC2007.03	WaterNSW to clarify pathway to compliance/pattern approval and provide to CAG members out of session.	D Swift-Hoadley	

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