

Barwon-Darling Customer Advisory Group - Minutes of Meeting



Location: WaterNSW, Blueridge Business Park, DUBBO

Date: 4 July 2019

Time: 9.30am

Present: Jeff Sowiak, Bruce Coward, Ian Cole, David Miller, Peter Brown, Greg Hill, Justin McClure, Bill Murray, Jason Wilson, Greg Ingham, Michael Allen (observer), David Stockler, Jonathan Dickson, Dan Berry, Andrew Scott (Skype), Emma Oates and Toni Hayes (minutes).

T Fulford and P Saha attended via Skype for agenda item 2.1 and 2.2.

B Mayhew and R Walker attended for agenda item 3.1.

M Clayton attended for agenda item 3.2.

Meeting Opened: 9.30am.

1. Introduction:

1.1 Welcome and introductions

- Members provided a brief introduction and the water types and entitlements they represent.

1.2 Apologies

- Tim Hosking, Ross Earl, Reece Wilson, Lindsay White, Raju Ranjit, Paul Keyte.

1.3 Confirmation of Agenda Items

- Nil additional items tabled.

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 CAG Member Introduction/Information

- WaterNSW provided an outline CAG roles and responsibilities, role of WaterNSW, CAG format and schedule and CAG member documentation and claims.

1.6 Election of Chairperson

- Two nominations received: I Cole was nominated by B Murray; J McClure was nominated by P Brown.
- A confidential ballot was held and nominees received equal votes. As agreed by attendees, nominations were drawn from a hat as per local government procedure. I Cole was elected Chairperson and appointed CAG Representative.

1.7 Minutes of Previous Meeting, 28 February 2019:

- Resolved the minutes of meeting held on 28 February 2019 be confirmed as a correct record. Taken as read.

*J Sowiak/J Wilson
carried*

Contact us

Call us on **1300 662 077**

Visit us at **waternsw.com.au**

Follow us on Twitter **@WaterNSW**

Provide feedback on "Your Voice" at **oursay.org/waternsw**

waternsw.com.au

1.8 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 Barwon-Darling which includes recent flows, salinity, access arrangements, upstream storage status, northern valleys storage breakdown, operating and forecast conditions. The plan is publicly available on WaterNSW's website at www.waternsw.com.au/customer-service/news/operations.
- The NSW Government issued a section 324 temporary pump restriction order for Mungindi to Tilpa on 17 April 2019 to protect environmental releases from Copeton and Glenlyon dams. The restriction was extended to Lake Wetherell on 8 May to allow the Warrego water to establish flow as far down the system as possible.
- Salinity levels at Wilcannia and Brewarrina discussed. Water could not be used for irrigation due to high salinity levels. Customers noted the EC spike at Brewarrina may have been due to the sensor being out of the water and requested it be lowered so it registers accurately.

Action BD1907.01: WaterNSW to review location/height of electrical conductivity sensor at Brewarrina Weir and consider lowering for more accurate results.

Responsibility: D Berry

- Blue-green algae alerts discussed.

2.2 Operational Drought Update (D Berry)

- System inflow vs allocation for southern valleys, Lachlan and northern valleys presented and discussed.
- Valley drought allocations, available water in accounts at 1 July 2019 and drought contingency measures presented and discussed.
- Discussed delivery of water to towns/communities in the unregulated system. Customers highlighted communities in the unregulated systems aren't recognised and suggested there be a policy decision to satisfy river flows in these systems, such as allocation in dams for unregulated communities.
- WaterNSW advised inflow sequences are now worse than drought of record. Discussions are occurring in relation to the current drought, what we do when we are worse than drought of record, when do we reset our modelling etc. It was noted this is a Department decision, but consideration needed to look at what is sensible for different locations.
- Customers raised concerns with what evolved in the Warrego system during the recent flow events. The flows going to the western floodplain resulted in loss of water. Toorale's infrastructure has the capacity to release 600ML/day and customers questioned the ability of the infrastructure to deliver essential water requirements. Suggested an upgrade to the outlet so water can be transferred downstream for critical human needs.

Action BD1907.02: WaterNSW to take customer concerns in relation to capacity of Toorale's infrastructure to deliver essential water requirements to the CWAP for discussion.

Responsibility: D Berry

- Customers stated if the policy for the first flush rule is established at Wilcannia then it is important the rule is recognised by intersecting streams. It was noted that the WSP will be put out for public feedback in August so there will be an opportunity to take concerns further/put in submission at this time.

Contact us

Call us on **1300 662 077**

Visit us at waternsw.com.au

Follow us on Twitter [@WaterNSW](https://twitter.com/WaterNSW)

Provide feedback on "Your Voice" at oursay.org/waternsw

- Further information on the drought is available on WaterNSW's website at www.watensw.com.au/supply/drought-information

3. Assets:

3.1 Asset Maintenance and Services Update (B Mayhew)

- Asset performance and maintenance in the Barwon-Darling presented and discussed, including safety improvements, asset performance, maintenance, breakdown/defects and upcoming works of note.

3.2 Ministerial Taskforce on Fish Passage update (M Clayton)

- WaterNSW presented an update on the Ministerial Taskforce, established in July 2017 restoring fish passage and reviewing alternatives to current s218 Fisheries Act legislative obligations.
- A strategic business case was completed end 2018 with final business case now to be prepared, which includes 77 WaterNSW sites (including 11 existing s218 dam safety offset projects currently on hold).
- WaterNSW has existing fish passage obligations in the Lachlan, Macquarie and Namoi valleys, concentrated around major dam safety upgrades over the last 10 years. Sites have been detailed in previous presentations to CAGs (refer attachment 1).
- IPART's *Rural Water Cost Shares Report* proposes a greater user cost share for Environmental Planning and Protection Activity, which includes fishways. The existing 50/50 share is proposed by IPART to increase to 80/20. As presented at previous CAG meetings, IPART took a beneficiary/impactor pays approach, favouring impactor pays.
- WaterNSW opposed this approach as the changes impact heavily on its customers. WaterNSW's submission to the review of rural water cost shares, including feedback from CAGs, can be found on IPART's website at <https://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/files/sharedassets/website/shared-files/investigation-administrative-water-rural-water-cost-shares/submissions-water-draft-report-rural-water-cost-shares/online-submission-watensw-y.-chora-29-nov-2018-074900000.pdf>

Action BD1907.03: WaterNSW to distribute previous CAG presentations on IPART Cost Share Review to all members.

Responsibility: T Hayes

- Walgett Shire Council noted the raising of Walgett Weir by 1m has triggered fish passage which now puts the project well over budget, with Council to source additional funding.
- Wilcannia Weir is grant funded so cost won't go into WaterNSW RAB.
- SDL Northern Basin Environmental Works and Measures Projects update provided. Customers highlighted the SDL reduction of 70GL from 390GL to 320GL and noted all the actions are being taken, but the benefits to locals are yet to be applied in northern basin tributaries. As a result, funds have been redirected and water lost with no immediate benefit from the activities.

4. Presentations/Consultation:

4.1 Regulatory Economics (J Dickson)

- The current WAMC Determination runs to 2020 with functions split between DoIW, NRAR and WaterNSW. An extension to the IPART timetable was requested by DoIW and granted and submissions for both the WAMC and Rural Valleys determinations are now due 30 June 2020.

Contact us

Call us on **1300 662 077**

Visit us at watensw.com.au

Follow us on Twitter [@WaterNSW](https://twitter.com/WaterNSW)

Provide feedback on "Your Voice" at oursay.org/watensw

- WaterNSW has engaged *New Democracy Foundation* to engage with customers. A jury approach will be used to recruit representative water users to work through a detailed engagement where customers have core input into how we can best deliver water and what is a fair way to pay for it. It is envisaged that CAG members will still have significant input into pricing discussions.
- Customers commented that it appears the government is outsourcing engagement. WaterNSW noted it is about opening up opportunity for a broader perspective and stakeholder group and is a robust process. Discussed.

4.2 Local Water Utilities Monitoring Review update (J Dickson)

- WaterNSW had an Operating Licence obligation to review water quality monitoring of water released for local water utilities customers. This review is now complete and a report has been provided to IPART.
- WaterNSW will communicate findings and initiate follow up discussions with individual LWUs.

4.3 Fixed Fee Rebate update (E Oates)

- The NSW government recently announced a repeat of the fixed fee rebate of up to \$4000 per licence to the fixed component for general security and some supplementary licences. All rebates will be applied automatically to future invoices from 1 July 2019.
- WaterNSW highlighted that it has a hardship policy. Customers who are having difficulty paying their WaterNSW bill should speak with our contact centre as we have a range of options designed to help. See also <https://www.waternsw.com.au/supply/drought-information>
- For more information on drought relief, please visit <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/droughthub/emergency-drought-relief-package>

4.4 Water Reform Implementation Plan (WRIP) (J Dickson)

- WaterNSW provided an update on the Water Reform Implementation Plan (WRIP) timeline, when changes take effect and the staged rollout timetable. At this time, there is no discussion or appetite for change to the 1 December deadline for compliance.
- Metering reform update presented including telemetry and new standards, consultation, field testing rules for duly qualified persons (DQP), inactive works for groundwater and meter title transfer. Reasonable use guidelines and reporting on non-telemetered meters is still to come.
- DPI has released a NSW Metering Guidance Tool for customers to ascertain requirements for compliance. It is available at <https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water-reform/metering-framework>
- By **1 December 2019** the remaining elements should be in place to allow customers to take action in response to meter regulations. WaterNSW is committed to supporting customers achieve compliance with new rules.
- Customers are concerned with MACE currently not included on the list of pattern approved meters, given MACE is used extensively in the valley and the timeframe for meters to be compliant. Discussed.

4.5 iWAS improvements (J Dickson)

- Carryover forecast by account and a trial of amending water orders within lead times is launching soon. Apportioning usage by licence/works coming later this year.

4.6 Water Insights Portal update (D Berry)

- As presented at the last meeting, WaterNSW has launched a new Water Insights Portal which is available on our website <https://www.waternsw.com.au/waterinsights/water-insights>

Contact us

Call us on **1300 662 077**

Visit us at waternsw.com.au

Follow us on Twitter [@WaterNSW](https://twitter.com/WaterNSW)

Provide feedback on "Your Voice" at oursay.org/waternsw

- Additional valleys have now gone live, with Barwon-Darling to go live by end of July. WaterNSW is keen to receive customer feedback on what they like, don't like, want to see etc and there is a feedback button on the page.
- Customers suggested that a link to Queensland sites would be beneficial.

5. General Business

- Nil new business raised.

Meeting Review and Close

Next Meeting: Thursday 31 October 2019 (TBC)

Meeting closed: 1.00pm

Contact us

Call us on **1300 662 077**

Visit us at **waternsw.com.au**

Follow us on Twitter **@WaterNSW**

Provide feedback on "Your Voice" at **oursay.org/waternsw**

Barwon-Darling Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 4 July 2019

Carried forward actions

Action No.	Action	Responsibility	Status
BD1902.01	Northern Valleys storage breakdown pie chart to be updated to reflect the GS allocation accessible and what is quarantined.	A Scott	Complete.

New actions

Action No.	Action	Responsibility	Status
BD1907.01	WaterNSW to review location/height of electrical conductivity sensor at Brewarrina Weir and consider lowering for more accurate results.	D Berry	
BD1907.02	WaterNSW to take customer concerns in relation to capacity of Toorale's infrastructure to deliver essential water requirements to the CWAP for discussion.	D Berry	
BD1907.03	WaterNSW to distribute previous CAG presentations on IPART Cost Share Review to all members.	T Hayes	Complete , refer to attachment 2.

Contact us

Call us on **1300 662 077**

Visit us at waternsw.com.au

Follow us on Twitter [@WaterNSW](https://twitter.com/WaterNSW)

Provide feedback on "Your Voice" at oursay.org/waternsw