Namoi-Peel Customer Advisory Group - Minutes of Meeting

Location: WaterNSW, 3 Caroline Way, NARRABRI

Date: 25 July 2019

Time: 9.30am

Present: Ian Coxhead, Brendon Warnock, Darren Swain, Darren Raeck, Daryl Albertson (Skype), David Gowing, David Stockler, Jonathan Dickson, Andrew Scott, Adrian Langdon, Emma Oates and Toni Hayes (minutes).

B Mayhew attended via Skype for agenda item 3.1-3.3.
M Clayton and C Braddock attended for agenda item 3.2.
J Lam/A Richardson attended via Skype for agenda item 4.2.

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

– Bruce Logan, Paul Keyte, Lindsay White, Jason Wilson, Ildu Monticone, Tom Woolaston, David Gee.

1.3 Confirmation of Agenda Items

– Nil new agenda items raised.

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

– I Coxhead was nominated by D Gowing/D Raeck and appointed to the position of Chairperson and CAG Representative unopposed. No other nominations received.

1.7 Minutes of Previous Meeting, 14 March 2019:

– Resolved the minutes of meeting held on 14 March 2019 be confirmed as a correct record. Taken as read.

D Raeck/D Gowing
carried

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 Namoi and Peel valleys including dam storage, water availability and deliverability of ordered water, inflows, outage planning and prognosis. The plan is publicly available on WaterNSW's website at www.waternsw.com.au/customer-service/news/operations.
- Water delivery restrictions and operational arrangements are outlined in the Sections 4.5 (Namoi) and 4.6 (Peel) and are specifically outlined for each river section to best assist landholders and customers with information relevant to their specific circumstances.
- Customers questioned what measures can be put in place for S&D users to get water. WaterNSW advised it has reached out to S&D customers regarding upcoming public meetings so customers understand what is happening and why and to explore options and potential impacts prior to any work commencing. Currently 40 customers have been identified who don't have access to groundwater bores. Letters have been sent direct to landholders/owners throughout the system to ensure involvement.

2.2 Operational Drought Update (A Langdon)

- System inflow vs allocation for the southern valleys, Lachlan and northern valleys; valley drought allocations; available water in accounts at 1 July 2019; and drought contingency measures presented and discussed.
- Further information on the drought is available on WaterNSW's website at www.waternsw.com.au/supply/drought-information

3. Assets:

3.1 Asset Maintenance and Services Update (B Mayhew)

- Asset performance and maintenance in the Namoi and Peel valleys presented and discussed, including safety improvements, maintenance delivery, breakdown/defects and upcoming works of note.

3.2 Annual Capital Plan (M Clayton)

- WaterNSW has committed to providing customers with visibility of Annual Capital Plans for feedback prior to WaterNSW Board approval.
- Namoi and Peel forecast, completed and in progress projects and new candidate projects presented and discussed.
- FY22-25 Regulatory Period – WaterNSW will have a draft capital program to present to customers in November with final to be presented March 2020. Submission due 30 June 2020.

Ministerial Taskforce on Fish Passage update

- 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 Fish Passage Optimisation Project update presented. The project is about determining the least possible cost for building fish passage and completion is scheduled end 2019.
- 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% customer cost share is proposed by IPART to increase to 80%. In its response, WaterNSW opposed this approach as the changes impact heavily on its customers.
- Northern Basin Environmental Works and Measures Projects update provided. WaterNSW is seeking to get prefeasibility funding to look into potential CWP solutions/options in the Border Rivers and Gwydir valleys.
- Customers queried whether pumped hydro has been considered as an option to mix water for CWP. WaterNSW advised there has been an expression of interest process for businesses to put up schemes at our storages, however no proposals are currently held for northern storages. Discussed.

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.
- WaterNSW has engaged *New Democracy Foundation* to engage with customers. A jury approach will be used to recruit representative water users across the state 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.
- Customers highlighted that selection of the jury is important and getting people with an understanding of water is key. WaterNSW agreed and noted that any potential member of a jury will be a water user. WaterNSW is currently putting together a reference guide for people who may want to take part.
- It is envisaged that CAG members will still have significant input into pricing discussions.

4.2 Levels of Service update (J Lam/A Richardson/A Fraser)

- WaterNSW provided an update on the Levels of Service project. Currently in the short-listing phase which will feed into cycle 2 workshops with Peel and Namoi customers.
- Key LOS priorities and shortlisted options presented and discussed.
- The cycle 2 workshops for the Peel and Namoi are scheduled for 14 or 27 November (Peel/Tamworth) and 15 or 28 November (Namoi/Narrabri), with the purpose to present findings and identify projects customers would like included in the 2020 IPART pricing submission.
- Customers suggested sending emails with the proposed dates in order to confirm with wider customer base. Customer participation in the Namoi has been low to date.

4.3 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.

4.4 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.
- For more information on drought relief, please visit https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/droughthub/emergency-drought-relief-package

4.5 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.
- 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
- Customers noted that it would be beneficial if WaterNSW provided some education to customers on how to read their own groundwater meters. WaterNSW will take this on board and agreed it would be worthwhile to communicate this to customers.

4.6 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.
- Customers highlighted the rules for take of alluvial groundwater (can extract 3 years in 2) are not in place for fractured rock and questioned whether this is fair and just. WaterNSW advised that the recharge component of the systems are not the same. Alluvial in the Namoi is huge with rapid draw down, whereas fractured rock works differently and recharge is very different. The Natural Resource Commission recently released a report on this and the whole space may come under more review in the current climate. Customers encouraged WaterNSW to investigate further to see if can be done.

4.7 Water Insights Portal update (A Langdon)

- 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
- Additional valleys have now gone live, with remaining sites to be live by end July 2019. 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.

5. Business Papers:

- Noted and taken as read.

6. General Business

6.1 CARM (Computer Aided River Management)

- As requested at the last meeting, WaterNSW provided a presentation on its CARM system, including benefits and application of CARM for improved river operations, environmental water delivery, planned environmental water, flood operations and further areas of development.

6.2 Recycling Water - Tamworth

- Customers noted that the Namoi Joint Organisation commissioned reports with a number of recommendations including recycling water in Tamworth and use of the Apsley River Scheme and Barnard Scheme to bring water over the range.
- Narrabri Shire Council advised that from a Council point of view, the report has a lot of shortcomings that didn't go into depth and didn't integrate with Council's current plans. There were a lot of motherhood statements with little detail.
- WaterNSW advised that potential long-term infrastructure options considered for further investigation to improve water availability in the Peel Valley includes small scale inter-basin transfer from Apsley and inter-basin transfer from Barnard River to Peel upstream of Chaffey Dam. For further information, refer to WaterNSW's 20 Year Infrastructure Options Study available on our website https://www.waternsw.com.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/132616/20-Year-Infrastructure-Options-Study-June-2018.pdf

Meeting Review and Close

Next Meeting: Thursday 21 November 2019 (TBC)
Meeting closed: 1.30pm

Namoi-Peel Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 25 July 2019

Carried forward actions			
Action No.	**Action**	**Responsibility**	**Status**
	Nil carried forward actions.		

New actions			
Action No.	**Action**	**Responsibility**	**Status**
	Nil new actions.		