

# Murrumbidgee Customer Advisory Group - Minutes of Meeting



**Location:** Video Conference

**Date:** 30 July 2020

**Time:** 9.00am

**Present:** Brendan Barry (Chair), Peter Sheppard, Bruce Campbell, Anthony Conallin, Lindsay Golsby-Smith, Tanya Thompson, Nick Maynard, Mark Brettschneider, Paul Maytom, Bede Spannagle, Jennifer McLeod (observer), Kate Lea-Perry (observer), Jonathan Dickson, Toni Hayes, Sonia Townsend, Enrico Proietti, Jason Cross-Martin, Steed Leonard, Carl Charlier, Vince Kelly, Jayme Wilson, Ben Arabin.

The following staff attended for specific agenda items: A Fisher and P Tracey (2.2), D Swift-Hoadley (2.4), B Mayhew (3.1), C Braddock (3.2).

**Meeting Opened:** 9.00am.

## 1. Introduction:

### 1.1 Welcome and introductions

**1.2 Apologies:** Hilton Taylor, James Maguire, Iva Quarisa.

### 1.3 Confirmation of Agenda Items

- The annual election of Chairperson will be carried over to the next face-to-face meeting.

### 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 March 2020:

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

*P Maytom/P Sheppard  
carried*

### 1.6 Actions arising from minutes

- See action sheet attached.

## 2. Presentations/Consultation:

### 2.1 Regulatory Economics – Pricing Determination Engagement (J Dickson)

- WaterNSW's submissions will be published as part of IPART's review process at [www.ipart.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au)

### 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.

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- Members questioned how prepared WaterNSW is if IPART doesn't accept a 1-year determination and moves to a 4-year determination. WaterNSW advised that there will be a significant impact, particularly around timeframe for engagement, however WaterNSW is committed to customer engagement and consultation.
- IPART has invited comment on the option of a 4-year determination and customers are encouraged to provide feedback direct to IPART (due 28 August 2020).

#### **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.
- Members queried if the Customer Jury process will still go ahead given the delay or will there be alternative engagement. WaterNSW advised that the jury process was always complementary to CAG engagement and CAGs will continue to be engaged in parallel with the juries. A revised jury approach may be possible however this is still in discussion.
- Members sought information on the non-urban metering reform submission due in December - what is being proposed and will it capture the costs WaterNSW will incur in relation to upgrading current state-owned meters prior to handover (*refer to agenda item 2.4*).

#### **2.2 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.
- Members sought information on other projects proposed in the Murrumbidgee. There has been a lot of mixed messages and confusion in the community about major projects in the valley. The 20YIOS identified potential opportunities but people are not aware of what is happening in the valley.
- WaterNSW advised the 20YIOS is a list of options that was completed by WaterNSW which identified potential infrastructure options, valley by valley, if funding became available. We are not aware of any major infrastructure work in the Murrumbidgee, noting that the MDBA also has a number of assets in the valley

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- Members commented that it is great to see the Government fast-tracking Wyangala Dam however noted a number of projects are being done simultaneously and questioned whether this will delay the project. WaterNSW advised that we are aware of other projects and will ensure they are complementary. Customer engagement is a priority and we will continue to engage with affected landholders.

#### **Western Weirs Program (P Tracey)**

- 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.
- 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.

#### **2.3 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.
- 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 water operations update will be provided at the CAG.

#### **Member comments:**

- Meetings are taking a significant amount of time. Members want input and understanding of what's going on however the challenge is how do we appraise ourselves of time and give feedback on where WaterNSW is up to as it affects us (eg Western Weirs is interesting but it doesn't affect the Murrumbidgee). We want to have as useful a conversation as we can about all matters in a shorter period of time.
- Other members don't agree that the ROSCCo is a duplication – the CAG was previously held for a whole day and information is now being split between morning and afternoon sessions. No duplication but there is a split with when information is given to participants. We can't see why the split happened and why operations moved from CAG to ROSCCo.
- With one meeting a question can be asked and answered, rather than waiting until the ROSCCo session.
- Members noted the ROSCCo doesn't have minutes or rolling actions, only notes, and there is a differentiation with the feedback we are giving at both forums. An example is an outstanding action from the CAG in relation to supplementary water that has been transferred to the ROSCCo, however has not progressed.

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- Members questioned what value they are getting from the CAG as customers given the separation between both forums. We understand there is no point presenting the operations update at both forums, however we don't feel we are getting the same value as in the past with the current format of meetings.
- WaterNSW noted a similar discussion occurred in the Murray CAG. Given the drought conditions in the north of the state it has been necessary for WaterNSW to remain agile around drought meetings. It has been fortunate that the Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys haven't required the same rigour and drought management actions that have been necessary in the north.

**Action MBG2007.01:** WaterNSW to collate feedback and review the necessity for holding two meetings in the Murrumbidgee valley (CAG and ROSCCo).

Responsibility: J Dickson/V Kelly

## 2.4 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/](http://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-telemetry-devices-and-solutions>. WaterNSW's DAS (data acquisition service) is a cloud-based system to securely collect and store water usage data.
- There are currently 3 LIDs on the approved list and will be available 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.
- 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.

### Discussion on handover of state-owned meters:

- WaterNSW is currently working through our obligations for compliance.
- WaterNSW will offer all state-owned meters to landholders. Prior to transfer WaterNSW will ensure meters are compliant and validated, with all relevant paperwork submitted on behalf of the landholder. Landholders are required to engage their own DQP for advice and ongoing maintenance. There is no cost to landholders at transfer, unless landholders want to change the meter configuration or location which would then be at their own cost.
- We will be in touch with affected customers in the next few weeks by mail to confirm the process and details. If customers wish to be proactive and start the process early you can contact [meter.maintenance@waternsw.com.au](mailto:meter.maintenance@waternsw.com.au)

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- Underground/buried meters discussed. WaterNSW advised that if the meters are compliant they can be verified in-situ. If not compliant, WaterNSW will excavate and validate and then rebury. If the landholder doesn't want the meter reburied, the cost to keep above ground will be the responsibility of the landholder.
- Members questioned the likely cost to WaterNSW and if there would be any pass-through charges to users. WaterNSW advised that a number of submissions have been put forward for funding, none of which propose any pass-through charge to users. However, as nothing has been approved, we do not know the costs involved or whether this will result in any additional cost to customers.
- Members queried if the process for state-owned groundwater meters is the same. WaterNSW advised we are working through this at the moment. Compliance dates will differ and triggers and thresholds may change, but the process for handover is the same.
- Members questioned if the requirement for telemetry on groundwater meters has been removed. WaterNSW advised that recording is still required, but not necessarily with telemetry. If telemetry is existing on the works it will stay there, however we are happy to have the conversation with each landholder. Customers should use the interactive metering tool on DPIE's website to understand what metering rules apply to each works - <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdGytCHtQ6ffmvsWXHxnD0TrUJShufVdR71bGI9sO1ZzkWP3g/form/Response>
- ICDs will be engaged directly, and will be case by case based on site, need and regulations.

## **2.5 Fixed Fee Rebate update (S Townsend)**

- 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 commencing in Q4, 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/drougthub](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/drougthub)

## **2.6 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.

## **3. Assets:**

### **3.1 Asset Maintenance Update (B Mayhew)**

- Asset performance and maintenance in the Murrumbidgee and Lowbidgee valleys presented and discussed, including delivery of routine preventative and corrective maintenance.
- Outages discussed (*refer to action MBG2003.01 below*).

### **3.2 Rural Pricing Submissions: FY22 & FY23-26 Capital Plans (C Braddock)**

- As discussed at agenda item 2.1, 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 for the Murrumbidgee is being prepared and will include 5-yearly dam surveillance at Burrinjuck and Blowering; Burrinjuck Dam stability; and deferred MCP projects.

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- The FY22 capital budget for the Lowbidgee Valley will be reduced due to lower volume of renewals and replacement works being proposed in the current period.
- Members queried what works are being done at Balranald. WaterNSW advised the project is to replace the operating platform as a fixed structure which can be removed in case of flood. There are no plans to regulate. A fishway is being considered, however because the works are of a different nature it will be pursued as a different project. The project will be seeking to make the fishway reliable.

#### **4. Business Papers:**

- Noted and taken as read.

#### **5. General Business:**

##### **5.1 Yanco SDL Technical Advisory Group (TAG) update (J Dickson)**

- WaterNSW attended a TAG meeting last week. It was agreed a small group of representatives from the TAG would meet with WaterNSW to highlight points to cover. WaterNSW is expecting DPIE to give us a presentation next week on where project is currently at. After that, a meeting with the TAG group will be held, expected within the next 3 weeks.

##### **5.2 Format of Future meetings**

- Members commented that current meetings are being undertaken via video conference only due to COVID, however do not want this to continue post-COVID. Face to face meetings are preferred.
- WaterNSW assured members that it is our intent to continue three face-to-face meetings per year once COVID restrictions are lifted.

#### **Meeting Review and Close**

**Next Meeting:** Thursday 26 November 2020

**Meeting closed:** 10.55am

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Carried forward actions

Action No.	Action	Responsibility	Status
MBG2003.01	WaterNSW to consider providing the schedule for outages at Nimmie-Caira structures to the environmental water holders.	B Mayhew	<p>Outages can be required for the purpose of carrying out asset projects or for asset maintenance work. Information about planned outages is published in the weekly water availability reports, which we believe is the best way to get the information out to the public into the future. The Assets Team is working to develop a longer-term program of planned outages, for both maintenance and project works, so that these are visible further in advance of the works.</p> <p>DPIE-EES commented there has been frustration in the past with not knowing what is on the register for replacement and therefore a missed opportunity for input into design. Into the future would like to have input if possible.</p> <p>The project team is working on a process to include stakeholder voices earlier in design choices and we are working to incorporate stronger consultation earlier. Will pass on feedback through project team for input into planning discussions.</p>

New actions

Action No.	Action	Responsibility	Status
MBG2007.01	WaterNSW to collate feedback and review the necessity for holding two meetings in the Murrumbidgee valley (CAG and ROSCCo).	J Dickson / V Kelly	

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