

# Namoi-Peel Customer Advisory Group - Minutes of Meeting



**Location:** Video Conference

**Date:** 23 July 2020

**Time:** 9.30am

**Present:** Ian Coxhead (Chair), Tom Woolaston, Lindsay White, Bilal Akhtar, Bruce Logan, Shaine Baker, David Gowing, Jane Humphries (observer), Ildu Monticone (observer), Jonathan Dickson, Toni Hayes, Sonia Townsend, Enrico Proietti, Anne-Maree Burke.

The following staff attended for specific agenda items: A Fisher (3.2), D Swift-Hoadley (3.4), B Mayhew (4.1), C Braddock (4.2).

**Meeting Opened:** 9.30am.

## 1. Introduction:

### 1.1 Welcome and introductions

**1.2 Apologies:** Paul Keyte, Brendon Warnock, David Gee.

### 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.
- David Gowing declared he has an interest in agenda item 6.1, Fractured Rock.

### 1.5 Minutes of Previous Meeting, 19 March 2020:

- Resolved the minutes of meeting held on 19 March 2020 be confirmed as a correct record. Taken as read.

*D Gowing/B Logan  
carried*

### 1.6 Actions arising from minutes

- See action sheet attached.

## 2. Water System Operations:

### 2.1 Water Delivery Update – Peel Valley (A Scott)

- The Namoi valley water operations report will be presented at the ROSCCo following today's CAG meeting.
- WaterNSW presented an operations update for the Peel valley, including 2019-20 overview, water allocation and availability, drought update, inflows and storages status. The outlook for 2020-21 was also presented and included climate outlook, allocations, operations and projects.
- The Peel valley is the only valley in NSW remaining on level 4 of the NSW Government's Extreme Events policy.

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- Environmental releases from Chaffey dam will be in accordance with applicable rules and approvals. The 3ML/day minimum release is currently suspended.
- Peel Environmental Water Technical Advisory Group (PEWTAG) discussed. Members questioned if membership has been finalised and if Tamworth Regional Council will be invited. WaterNSW advised the group has met a number of times. Membership currently consists of departmental staff, prescribed by conditions given to WaterNSW in relation to the pipeline. The committee has the capacity to invite other stakeholders, however the Terms of Reference (TOR) are not yet finalised. The TOR will be published when available.
- Tamworth Regional Council would like to formally request involvement on the PEWTAG. WaterNSW will pass on Council feedback to the committee and forward relevant contact details to B Logan for membership.

**Action NP2007.01:** Pass on request from Tamworth Regional Council to be involved on the PEWTAG and forward relevant contact details for membership to B Logan.

*Responsibility: A Scott*

- Approvals and authorisation of Chaffey Dam to Dungowan Pipeline discussed. Refer to link below for further information, including [Commonwealth Approval](#) and [Authorisation from NSW Government](#).
- A water carting rebate is available to eligible applicants through Service NSW – refer <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-water-carting-rebate>
- Groundwater resource status information presented and discussed. WaterNSW is happy to receive feedback at any time as to what stakeholders would like to see presented in relation to groundwater.
- For information on the Peel valley, including water availability and drought reports, go to <https://www.waternsw.com.au/supply/drought-information/regional-nsw/peel-valley>
- A demonstration of the *WaterInsights* portal was presented and received positive feedback from members.

### **3. Presentations/Consultation:**

#### **3.1 Regulatory Economics – Pricing Determination Engagement (J Dickson)**

WaterNSW's submissions were submitted to IPART on 30 June 2020 and 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.
- Members questioned whether the Chaffey Dam to Dungowan Pipeline will be reflected in future submissions to IPART, including who pays. Question taken on notice.

**Action NP2007.02:** WaterNSW to confirm if the Chaffey Dam to Dungowan Pipeline will be reflected in future submissions to IPART.

*Responsibility: J Dickson*

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### **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.
- NRAR and DPIE will make a joint submission to IPART, however there will be a single determination made for all Agencies.

### **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.

### **Current activities for Dungowan Dam:**

- Extensive work continues with landholders potentially impacted by the project and face to face meetings have been held with the majority of landholders.
- Monthly meetings are being held with registered Aboriginal parties and regular targeted briefings have also been held with Tamworth Regional Council and Tamworth Business Chamber.
- A business portal has been established for local businesses to register interest in participating in the project, which supports a key principle around maximising local benefit.
- We have used local media to provide project updates to the community and promote the business portal. A dedicated Facebook page has been established to allow the community and interested stakeholders to receive information and ask questions about the project.
- For more information please visit <https://www.waternsw.com.au/projects/new-dams-for-nsw/dungowan-dam>
- Members questioned whether there will be any environmental water held in the dam and what will happen in relation to irrigation releases for those downstream of the dam. WaterNSW advised this work is being undertaken as part of the development of the final business case. An update will be provided at the next CAG meeting.

### **Western Weirs Program (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.

### **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 water operations update will be provided at the CAG.
- Peel members were pleased that Peel operations updates will continue to be presented at the CAG when there is no Peel ROSCCo following.
- Members support both CAGs and ROSCCOs, stating ROSCCOs provide flexibility with attendees (DPIE etc) and timing. Operations updates are valuable to everyone so need to ensure they continue.

### **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/](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.
- 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 requested a list of requirements for the Peel area be sent to customers. WaterNSW advised that this will be sent to all water users.
- Availability of LIDs discussed. WaterNSW advised 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

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mid-July. It is estimated there will be 1200 sites requiring this for 1 December and vendors have indicated there are ample devices available to meet this deadline.

- Members expressed concern that these devices have not been tested in a hot northern summer, indicating users can't be confident they will be successful. WaterNSW advised that the Government sets the standards and these devices have been tested and approved for use. WaterNSW is also a customer and is required to meet the same standards and deadlines and similar concerns have been passed on to the Department.
- Members noted MACE's withdrawal from seeking pattern approval for its meters. WaterNSW and DPIE are aware of this and the challenge it creates for customers. DQPs can provide assistance with a pathway to compliance. At this point in time there are no plans to alter the current due dates.

### **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/drougthub](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/drougthub)

### **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.
- Members noted the Peel Regulated River Water Source is not included. WaterNSW advised that on 1 July 2020, 24 WSPs changed including the 4 in the Peel which were previously under one WSP. The Peel regulated, unregulated, groundwater and fractured rock water sources have now been created as 4 different WSPs, noting they now have differing review dates.
- The first notification will be for the Peel Unregulated River Water Source, with the remaining being notified over the rest of the year. The conditions notifications relate to specific individual licences (not broad scale WSP changes). Mandatory conditions have been updated to ensure they are more consistent and easily understood.

## **4. Assets:**

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

- Asset performance and maintenance in the Namoi and Peel 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 capital budget for the Namoi valley FY22 Pricing Submission will be increased on an annual basis with key items including asset renewal (incl coating of Keepit radial gates), dam safety portfolio risk assessment and Gunidgera fishway design.

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- The capital budget for the Peel valley FY22 Pricing Submission will be similar to current period on an annual basis.

## 5. Business Papers:

- Noted and taken as read.

## 6. General Business:

### 6.1 Peel Valley Fractured Rock Water Source

- As discussed at agenda item 3.6, the Peel regulated, unregulated, groundwater and fractured rock water sources are now in 4 different WSPs. New conditions don't apply until formal notifications are issued to each licence holder.
- Members stated they have lost confidence in WaterNSW's ability to approve water licences in the Peel where they believe some approvals have been contrary to the WSP rules and regulations, putting alluvial water in the Peel at risk.
- Members stated they have raised specific issues and objections with WaterNSW a number of times with no resolution or success. Issues were also reported to NRAR, who advised nothing was wrong.
- The long term available annual extraction limit (LTAAEL) has been significantly reduced, so the resource is fully allocated. Customers must have an access licence with shares in order to draw the water. There are independent checks by both WaterNSW and DPIE hydrogeologists to ensure conditions are met. A lot of conditions are put on the bores if approved.
- Peel Valley Water Users Association (PVWUA) highlighted a number of concerns to WaterNSW in March including two approvals for putting a fractured rock bore in an alluvium zone (believed to be against WSP). The WSP will not allow transfer of a fractured rock licence into an alluvium zone.
- WaterNSW advised that we believe they are in the correct water source and the Department indicated they were in the appropriate zone. Will need to look at the specific approvals again to confirm. Members believe this is incorrect and would like this looked into again.

**Action NP2007.03:** WaterNSW to review approvals for fractured rock bores as raised by Peel Valley Water Users and provide a response out of session.

*Responsibility: A Fuller*

- Members highlighted an issue with at least 2 bores in the valley being dug and used prior to WaterNSW publishing the advertisement notifying of the applications. WaterNSW was contacted and customers were advised to report to NRAR, who "turned a blind eye". WaterNSW advised it has no power to investigate compliance breaches, this is the sole responsibility of NRAR. We do not have visibility of Alleged Breach Notices (ABNs) or breaches unless WaterNSW is the instigator with NRAR. WaterNSW will assess an application against the rules and this can be done in parallel with a NRAR investigation.
- Members raised an issue in relation to the reduction of fractured rock take, with quite a few new bores being dug. Customers were informed there'd be no changes and some users have purchased water but have been told they cannot use it (under a permanent dealing). Specific details to be provided to WaterNSW to review out of session.

**Action NP2007.04:** Provide specific application details of permanent dealings to WaterNSW to review. WaterNSW to liaise with member out of session.

*Responsibility: D Gowing/A Fuller*

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### Meeting Review and Close

**Next Meeting:** Thursday 13 November 2020

**Meeting closed:** 12.00pm

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## Namoi-Peel Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 23 July 2020

### Carried forward actions

Action No.	Action	Responsibility	Status
	Nil carried forward actions.		

### New actions

Action No.	Action	Responsibility	Status
<b>NP2007.01</b>	Pass on request from Tamworth Regional Council to be involved on the PEWTAG and forward relevant contact details for membership to B Logan.	A Scott	
<b>NP2007.02</b>	WaterNSW to confirm if the Chaffey Dam to Dungowan Pipeline will be reflected in future submissions to IPART.	J Dickson	
<b>NP2007.03</b>	WaterNSW to review approvals for fractured rock bores as raised by Peel Valley Water Users and provide a response out of session.	A Fuller	
<b>NP2007.04</b>	Provide specific application details of permanent dealings to WaterNSW to review. WaterNSW to liaise with member out of session.	D Gowing / A Fuller	

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