

# Murray-Lower Darling Customer Advisory Group - Minutes of Meeting



**Location:** Video Conference

**Date:** 25 November 2020

**Time:** 9.00am

**Present:** Louise Burge (Chair), Katharine McBride, Michael Pisasale, Sally Dye, Judith Damiani, Rachel Strachan, Michael Chalmers, Alastair Starritt, Hilton Taylor, Alan Mathers (observer), David Stockler, Jonathan Dickson, Vince Kelly, Tom Watson, Sarah Boyd, Lorena Oliviera, Sonia Townsend and Toni Hayes.

The following staff attended for specific agenda items: B Mayhew (2.1), C Braddock (2.2), D Swift-Hoadley & A Walker (3.1), D Turner & K Drinkwater (3.5), A Fisher (5.1) and K Andersen (5.2).

**Meeting Opened:** 9.00am.

## 1. Introduction:

### 1.1 Welcome and introductions

1.2 **Apologies:** John Lolicato, Andrew Hicks.

### 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 Meetings, 25 March 2020 and 29 July 2020:

- Resolved the minutes of meeting held on 25 March 2020 be confirmed as a correct record. Taken as read.

*L Burge/A Mathers  
carried*

- Resolved the minutes of meeting held on 29 July 2020 to be confirmed as a correct record. Taken as read.

*K McBride/M Pisasale  
carried*

### 1.6 Actions arising from minutes

- See action sheet attached.

### 1.7 Election of Chairperson

- L Burge was nominated by A Mathers and appointed to the position of Chairperson unopposed. No other nominations received.

## 2. Assets:

### 2.1 Asset Maintenance update (B Mayhew)

- Asset performance and maintenance in the Murray and Lower Darling valleys presented and discussed, including routine preventative and corrective maintenance delivery.

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- Customers advised there is erosion at the inlet channel structure at Koondrook Perricoota. Has been raised with Koondrook Perricoota working group.

**Action MLD2011.01:** *Confirm with Maintenance Team that they are aware of erosion at the inlet channel structure at Koondrook Perricoota (bank erosion of lead channel off main river to weir structure).*

*Responsibility: B Mayhew*

- Customers noted there is movement in the sill on the downstream side of the Koondrook Perricoota structure and questioned where this is up to. WaterNSW advised this is a work in progress - the maintenance engineering team has engaged an external consultant and a final solution is yet to be identified.
- Customers questioned what work is being done on the Pamamaroo Inlet. WaterNSW advised the project team is doing work there, completing an initial round of work to stabilise some parts of the structure. Will provide an update at the next meeting.

## **2.2 Rural Pricing Submission & Capital Plan update: FY22-25 (C Braddock)**

- WaterNSW presented an overview of the rural pricing submission capital plan FY22-25 for the Murray and Lower Darling valleys, including key dates, expenditure by program (comparison between 1-year and 4-year determinations), water infrastructure renewal projects and dam safety projects.
- Customers noted some of the projects relate to Menindee and questioned who will fund them and why should customers pay for things that may or may not come out of the SDL Project. WaterNSW advised that we have an ongoing obligation to maintain our assets which are funded through the normal IPART process, however where we believe the assets might be impacted by the SDL we have sought to defer where appropriate and will continue to review in light of the SDL process.

### **Presentations/Consultation:**

#### **3.1 Water Reform Implementation Plan (WRIP) Update (D Swift-Hoadley)**

##### **Metering update:**

- WaterNSW provided an update on metering reforms including next steps, DQPs, telemetry, recording and reporting, rollout dates, conditions that apply now, rules and standards, path to compliance and government-owned meters.
- All surface water pumps 500mm and above must be compliant by 1 December 2020 (for whole of NSW). Customers are encouraged to check their work approval for pump size. [Irrigation Australia Limited \(IAL\)](#) has a list of certified meter installers on its website.
- Conditions that apply to all works from 1 April 2019 presented, including requirements for faulty metering equipment, new or replacement meters and inactive works. Meters must be accurate, tamper proof and auditable.
- The NSW Government listened to feedback from water users and decided that Government (via WaterNSW) will retain ownership of existing government-owned meters. Affected customers will be contacted ahead of rollout dates with more information and will ensure all valid sites are compliant.
- Customers sought clarification on where and when a replacement meter would be required (eg replace MACE). WaterNSW advised that if a meter was faulty it can be repaired, however if not pattern approved will need to follow the pathway to compliance (ie certification from manufacturer to show +/- 2.5% accuracy in lab) and be signed off by a DQP to show it has

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been installed correctly. If a meter can't be repaired and must be replaced, it must be replaced with a new pattern approved meter (refer to [NSW Non-Urban Water Meter Framework](#)).

- DPIE advised that under the metering rules, existing meters installed prior to 1 April 2019 can be used under the new rules, however they need to be demonstrated to be accurate prior to the rollout date and then at regular intervals for open channel (every year) and closed conduit (every 5 years). A non-pattern approved meter is only able to be used **if installed prior to** 1 April 2019. There is no sunset date for these meters to be replaced, can be used indefinitely as long as accuracy can be demonstrated at the required regular intervals. When it comes time they can't be repaired, they must be replaced according to the framework.
- Customers questioned if anyone is auditing independent DQPs. DPIE advised that NRAR is the regulator charged with enforcing the non-urban water meter framework and as part of that they will have a role around compliance enforcement of documentation/certification of DQPs. IAL also has a role as they regulate the conduct of DQPs, so auditing will be a combination of both.
- Customers questioned whether government-owned meters that already have telemetry will also require a data logger. DPIE advised that a meter fitted with a LID will satisfy the data logging requirements of the rules.
- Telemetry on government-owned meters will be replaced by WaterNSW to meet the new standards and all valid sites will be made compliant by the due date. LIDs will be added as required and a cost incurred. The current pricing submission does not encompass this cost and WaterNSW is currently in discussion with other agencies with respect to how this will be funded. What and how much gets passed through to users is still in discussion with government and ultimately for IPART to make a determination.
- Customers questioned if LIDs will make billing more expensive. WaterNSW advised that we will be operating the DAS and there will be no additional cost for billing. We will continue to access the data and operate the DAS across the state. Other agencies will also be able to access the data (DPIE/NRAR).
- Customers queried whether information on government-owned meters will be provided to the landholders to ensure/give confidence the meters are compliant. Once validated, WaterNSW will let landholders know the meters have been made compliant. NRAR will also have access to this information and are aware of WaterNSW's fleet-based approach.
- Given the costs of the rollout in the southern basin, customers questioned if there is an expected cost scenario that WaterNSW is anticipating. WaterNSW advised there will be a cost associated with the works. How much get passed to customers is yet to be finalised/determined. There has been a change to the framework policy with the change on the position of handover. WaterNSW will be making a supplementary submission to IPART on the cost of the rollout (refer also to agenda item 3.3).
- Customers questioned if the buried meters will be dug up to be verified. WaterNSW advised that we are taking a fleet-based approach which allows us to use a % for the whole fleet (% of a family of meters, not whole fleet). We will dig up a sample to prove they haven't deteriorated and affected landholders will be advised of any plans to excavate.
- **Engagement Landscape (J Dickson)**

#### **DPIE – Water Markets Trading**

- The Department (DPIE) will soon announce a public engagement on water trading transparency, in the form of an online survey and webinars (hosted by DPIE and WaterNSW),

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which is a follow on to previous discussions on transparency. They will be seeking input from water users, specifically those who have traded in the last 12-24 months.

- The NSW Government is encouraging customers and the community to have their say on what information about water ownership and water trading is made public in NSW. They are seeking feedback on current water market information platforms (water information dashboards and WaterInsights) to better understand what information should be shared and how to make the platforms easier to use.
- The public exhibition will run from 30 November to 1 February, with webinars to be held 3 December 2020 and 20 January 2021.
- See <https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/licensing-trade/trade/have-your-say> for more information.

### **WaterNSW Pricing – Customer Conversations**

- After IPART releases its draft report in March 2021, WaterNSW proposes to broaden our engagement for **our next pricing proposal**. CAG membership will form the basis of those engaged, with the addition of a wider community of customers and water users in order to ensure that what we propose in terms of investment reflects our customers' views.
- Engagement will commence in three stages, with WaterNSW producing a 'conversation kit' for small groups to talk and respond online with their summary thoughts. Zoom meetings will then follow on emerging and common themes discussed. We hope this will contribute to a more informed pricing discussion leading to a customer supported determination.
- **Regulatory Economics – Rural Pricing Determination Engagement (J Dickson)**
- As presented previously, with the impact of drought and bushfires in many valleys, WaterNSW proposed a shorter-term pricing determination to lock in 2021 pricing for customers. The shorter determination was broadly supported by CAGs across all valleys. However, some medium-large customers responded to IPART's issues paper indicating a 4-year term was preferred for certainty of pricing. IPART has since confirmed they require a 4-year determination, with engagement to be complete by March 2021 and new pricing to take effect 1 July 2021.
- WaterNSW provided an overview of what was included in the pricing proposal presented to IPART. What was not included in the original but will be included in a supplementary submission to go to IPART on 30 November, is meter reform costs (meter upgrade costs, amended meter service charge, DAS and collection costs, telemetry management costs). These are additional requirements placed on WaterNSW resulting from the metering reforms.
- At the public hearing, we heard that customers wanted a 4-year term, more information on fixed:variable tariff split, opex performance vs allowance, capex, metering and reform costs, cost share change impacts and pass-through charges.
- Customers noted that IPART Cost Shares have been a problem for some time. We need to understand and have input into why apportionment decisions are deemed fair and equitable when customers believe they aren't. WaterNSW advised that, as presented and discussed at a number of CAG meetings, IPART determines cost shares. As part of their cost shares review they proposed changing the cost share from 50:50 user:government to 80:20. WaterNSW opposed this at the time and strongly encouraged water users to make representation to IPART on this. At the public hearing in November, the Chair of IPART indicated they would continue to accept submissions on the cost share arrangements.

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- Customers questioned if the significant exit of permanent water in the region has an impact on remaining irrigators' charges. WaterNSW advised that charges are based on a 20-year rolling average, therefore no immediate impact. Temporary trade attracts usage fees. Discussion was held on impact of permanent water leaving the valley.

**Action MLD2011.02:** WaterNSW to provide information on volumes of water that have left the district in permanent trades.

*Responsibility: R Cocks/V Kelly*

- WaterNSW presented a breakdown of bill impact for small customers vs large customers in the Murray-Lower Darling.
- Due to the short timeframe remaining to consult on a 4-year determination, WaterNSW is proposing to hold intensive engagement with CAGs on metering and reform costs, opex performance vs allowance and capex by valley. Today we are seeking customer feedback on issues customers want to discuss and engagement opportunities given the limited timeframe (need to engage on the draft IPART report by March 2021).
- Feedback was sought from members on the following: a pre-Christmas meeting (90 mins); an online meeting prior to Australia Day (90 mins); and two meetings in February.:
- Customers would like to discuss impact of NRAR (cost). WaterNSW advised that NRAR costs come under WAMC (different determination). NRAR is one-third of the WAMC charge (*refer to agenda item 3.4.*)
- Customers suggested a preliminary meeting prior to Christmas, noting the need for as much information as possible in advance to prepare, then a meeting from second/third week in January. Issues for discussion should also include cost share arrangements, metering and pass-through costs.
- Customers stated that sentiment at a recent landholder meeting was that reliability has dropped from 84% to 40% with no reflection of this in fees and charges in relation to reliability or allocation. Customers don't find it sustainable to increase charges and reduce reliability. Comments noted by WaterNSW. WaterNSW has a revenue requirement and must put forward what it costs us to run the business. Ultimately IPART will decide how much of that gets passed through to customers, taking in account willingness and ability to pay.
- Customers voiced concern over the proposed increase in MDBA pass-through in the Murray. WaterNSW is not responsible for calculating user share but is required to collect charges on behalf of Government. Customers were encouraged to speak to DPIE who would be part of the meeting later in the day.
- Comparison of OPEX for rural valleys FY10-FY25 against the Regulatory Allowance presented and discussed. WaterNSW's operating expenditure has been 33% above the IPART allowance for four years, set in 2017. The allowance was based on achieving significant efficiencies which were unable to be achieved due to a number of uncontrollable costs (including flood operations, merger costs, increased corporate governance obligations). Over the next four years, WaterNSW proposes average operating expenditure of 3% below our actual operating expenditure in 2019-20.
- Summary of one-year pricing proposal compared to a two-four year pricing proposal for the Murray-Lower Darling presented and discussed. Customers questioned how a 13% increase is justified when wages are not going up. WaterNSW noted that there is generally a smoothed increase with a range of activities forecast to occur to lead to these price increases. WaterNSW was only advised by IPART on 11 November 2020 that they required a four-year determination, against what we consulted with CAGs, now we have a much shorter period for engagement.

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- Customers noted that engagement is important and valued. The importance of keeping project options and costs efficient is important, gaining customer feedback will assist in developing plans that are not supported. Comments were noted.

### **3.4 Regulatory Economics – WAMC Determination Engagement (DPIE/NRAR)**

#### **Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (A Chadwick)**

- DPIE presented a review of proposed WAMC water management prices to apply from 1 July 2021. The proposal reflects the changes to water management and aims to mitigate impacts on customers, including capped price increases to help manage bill impacts on water users and no change to the regulatory framework that underpins prices. There was strong recognition from Government that now is not the time to impose increases to water users off the back of drought.
- Under the proposal, 64% of users will pay the minimum annual charge, which will increase from \$214-\$260 per year over the regulatory period.
- There is no change proposed to IPART's Impactor Pays principle to cost shares (ie those who create the need for a service should pay for it). IPART believes this principle leads to more efficient, equitable and transparent prices. Under current cost share, IPART has determined FPH will be fully recovered from government.
- Capped pricing means the government pays more and a bigger share. The proposal limits price increase to 5%/year (plus inflation) to protect users from bill shock. *IPART determined WAMC expenditure vs Proposed WAMC expenditure graph* presented.
- DPIE is proposing a change in the way MDBA and BRC pass-through costs are distributed to better reflect MDBA cost categories. Natural resource management will be a WAMC user charge whereas river operations would be a pass-through charge.
- Currently under WAMC, there are three agencies under a single banner (DPIE/NRAR/WaterNSW). The proposal is for a single determination and a single set of water management prices where agencies will work collaboratively to deliver efficient water management services.
- During the 2016-20 determination DPIE expanded its water management functions to meet expectations, invested more to meet existing commitments (FPH licensing framework, WSPs, WRPs) and consulted extensively with users on each reform and program. *IPART Determined vs Actual DPIE OPEX in the 2016 regulatory period* presented.
- In the next regulatory period, DPIE will continue to deliver expanded service levels, including full implementation of: WSPs, 12 Regional Water Strategies by 2023; new metering regulations by 2024; improved management of floodplain harvesting; and improved management of environmental water. *IPART Determined OPEX/Actual DPIE Opex 2016 vs Proposed DPIE Opex 2021* presented.
- Customers commented that if costs are passed on it is only reasonable that they are subject to IPART scrutiny to determine if relevant. Would argue that fishways are driven by the community and 100% of cost should not be borne by irrigators. It is only fair that if irrigators use 1/3 of the water (as in the case of MIL) they should only be subject to 1/3 of the cost.
- Customers would like to see more transparency around the MDBA pass-through charges and how they are splitting them (river operations/environmental management). Customers need to know the basis of the splits. DPIE will convey this sentiment to IPART.
- Customers stated there needs to be a collaborative process between the government and water users to reduce reliance on IPART (should be a NSW policy position). Customers have raised the issue of lack of transparency with MDBA charges for some time, as there is a

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reluctance to put faith in the IPART process. There should be genuine consultation with DPIE and WaterNSW to go through issues of concern with customers. The Murray is different in terms of charges that apply due to the three states and there is a sense of urgency to ensure we don't get separate and disconnected government decisions that apply to pricing. A Chadwick (DPIE) advised she will consult with colleagues and see what can be done.

- Customers stated that it is unfair that the Murray pick up all obligations to SA/MDBA when the Darling is not currently capable of delivering water.
- Customers questioned the rules for surface water management in the northern basin and if it is correct that there is no requirement to ensure sufficient flows reach Menindee and contribute towards South Australia's minimum entitlement flow. WaterNSW advised the northern regulated systems don't provide a great amount of connectivity to the southern basin. There are restrictions in the WSPs for supplementary access based on flow triggers within the Barwon-Darling system itself, but there are no references to storage volumes or capacity to deliver out of Menindee Lakes. The three objectives are fish passage, connectivity and BLR to Wilcannia. There are no targets that go past Wilcannia.
- IPART has reached view that floodplain harvesting is not about extractive use. Users of extractive water pay zero of that cost. IPART has come to the view that 100% of compliance is extractive use. Extractive use is a driver of costs, but not the whole driver, so many costs are split between government and users.
- Customers questioned with flow contribution to Menindee being non-existent, how does the issue for penalties on exceedance of take come into effect now it has been removed from the floodplain harvesting (FPH) policy? DPIE advised that the FPH policy currently being implemented is a program to issue licences and works approvals, with the same conditions and compliance requirements as any other access licence. In terms of limits specifically for FPH, under NSW WSPs limits are set for an entire water source, not a specific form of take (SDLs have same mechanism). Therefore, if actual take exceeds what is expected, other forms of take will have to reduce in order to meet the limits. There has been no removal of any compliance requirements or compliance action from any documents. Licensing FPH is a new thing. There has been no specific FPH documents that have existed before, so can't be removed from anything.
- DPIE noted that reliability has increased with this policy as has not been licensed or regulated in the past. Even though there has been a limit set in the past, there was no control or regulation. Now there are limits and take can be tracked. There is a reduction in take through the issuing of licences. It is estimated that an additional 6.1GL will be returned to the system just from Border Rivers.

#### **Natural Resources Access Regulator (T Gilbert)**

- NRAR provided background on the establishment of NRAR and the need for water compliance and enforcement in NSW (*Matthews and Ombudsman Reports 2017*). All costs associated with the establishment of NRAR were borne by government.
- Cost drivers since the 2016 WAMC determination include independent investigations into water compliance, additional obligations under the *NRAR Act*, increased workload, increased size of regulated community, reforms (eg metering) and low knowledge of rules.

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- Statistics on compliance activity since the establishment of NRAR presented, illustrating increased workload and activity. This increase has largely been managed with the same resource level.
- NRAR WAMC compliance costs step change presented. NRAR is seeking to reduce costs through alternative funding measures as well as licence fees and charges as another source.
- NRAR is committed to closing the gap by finding efficiencies, including increased analytics, intelligence and use of technology, investing in staff capability and pushing voluntary compliance (*Forecast NRAR Compliance Workload vs Compliance Resources* presented).
- NRAR's focus is on compliance, not prosecution, supported by education, audits and monitoring. Benefits to stakeholders includes protecting irrigated agricultural productions in NSW, protecting water property rights in NSW and restoring social licence.
- Customers provided feedback on recent site visits by NRAR in the region. Two NRAR staff members attended a site with limited skill set, were unable to measure the pipes and were ill-prepared to do the work. To be discussed with NRAR out of session.
- Customers stated that there is disproportionate costs being applied between the north and south. NRAR stated that non-compliance is widespread and equally proportionate across the state so is appropriate to be distributed across the state. NRAR publishes the number of alleged breaches coming in and the number of responses which is available by WSP on the NRAR website on a monthly basis. There is also a map showing where enforcement activities are being undertaken. NRAR is trying to be very transparent about where activities are and welcomes feedback on the best way to convey this.
- **Major Projects update (A Fisher)**

#### **Critical State Significant Infrastructure (CSSI) projects**

- WaterNSW provided an update on the three major projects that have been identified as Critical State Significant Infrastructure (CSSI) projects in NSW (Wyangala Dam raising, Dungowan Dam and Pipeline and Mole River Dam).
- Webinars with affected stakeholders and interested members of the public are being held regularly in each valley.

#### **Western Weirs Project**

- As previously presented, the purpose of the project is to develop a Strategic Business Case (SBC) to make an *initial determination* on whether there is an underlying need of strategic value that requires a capital investment solution. 28 weirs are included within the study area, including 13 town weirs.
- The project objectives are to improve water security for towns in the far west region, including Aboriginal communities supplied by those towns; investigate infrastructure options that may improve the adaptive management of flows along the system; and investigate weir ownership and future funding arrangements, including consideration of local and state government concerns on the cost of ongoing operations and maintenance of critical river infrastructure.
- Customers stated they don't think the project will relieve the issues of drought-proofing and providing critical needs to the Lower Darling. Will wait to see how it progresses but there seems to be a lack of appetite by DPIE to protect critical needs in the Lower Darling WSP. The Project Team will reach out to customers directly to discuss further and get input.

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- In relation to private weirs, customers queried whether these will be removed or WaterNSW will take over operations. WaterNSW will look at this as we move through the process. We need to understand ownership conditions, value, impact etc and will make recommendations to investigate.

#### 4. Business Papers:

- Noted and taken as read.

#### 5. General Business:

##### 5.1 Floodplain Harvesting update (K Andersen/DPIE)

- DPIE provided an overview of what is happening in this space and the timeframes for implementing the policy, including the difference between **floodplain harvesting policy** (manages floodplain water extractions to protect the environment and reliability of water supply for downstream water users - licensed, measured, managed in the WSPs) and **Floodplain Management Plans** (FMP) (guide application and assessment of flood work approvals {structures built on floodplains}).
- Customers questioned how the 500% accounting rules does not keep take at the current level. If a river cannot provide 100% one year how could it be expected to contribute 500% in carryover. DPIE advised that if a customer has an annual entitlement but is unable to take water, they can carryover entitlements so can be taken when effect occurs. Over time the annual entitlement averaged out will be below entitlement level. Account management rules relate to the form of the take.
- The 500% rule is a draft rule, so customers are encouraged to make a formal submission on this. There is a lot of supporting material on DPIE's website that explains it and a video will also be available in the next few days.
- The policy is being applied in 5 northern valleys in NSW. The Border Rivers is on public exhibition until 30 November (with others due early next year), and includes the technical documents and modelling showing re-estimate of take and the current levels. Border Rivers is currently 13% above legal limit, so take will need to be reduced by this. The downstream outcomes report shows a 6.1GL return to the system (from Border only). As each valley's modelling results are known there will be a cumulative total. It is important to note that licensing FPH **does result** in increased flows downstream.
- L Burge stated that if targets downstream are limited at Wilcannia, there is no assurance that sufficient flows will get to Menindee with rules around level of take. DPIE noted that a conversation about flow targets downstream was had with L Burge last week and DPIE is preparing a detailed response which talks specifically to the downstream targets which can be shared with the CAG.
- Draft amendments to the regulation are open for public comment until 20 December. There are four proposed amendments. The first is to enable the issuing of licenses; the second gives effect to the FPH Measurement Policy; the third is an exemption for rainfall runoff that is collected in tailwater drains **outside** a FPH **event** and the fourth sets out to provide a transitional arrangement for users who have historically been taking the water for them to be able to do that in line with WMA until the FPH policy is implemented.
- For more information, water users should refer to the downstream outcomes report on DPIE's website.

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## 5.2 CAG Charter (J Dickson)

- In a recent audit, WaterNSW was asked to amend wording in CAG Charter around the process for amending the CAG Charter (essentially how proposed amendments can happen). Proposed changes included with business papers.
- The Murray-Lower Darling CAG supports the proposed amendments to the Customer Advisory Groups Charter as tabled.

## 5.3 Allocation Announcements

- Customers stated that the general security allocation announcements are confusing to the public. They include the carryover percentage in with the GS percentage, which becomes misleading and gives the impression of greater availability than actually exists. Customers requested to have carryover listed as a separate percentage to general security when making announcements.
- Customers also stated that there are resource issues in the Lower Darling as well with allocation announcements stating users have 38% allocation when in fact the environment holds 90%+ of that. Would like that included as well.
- K Drinkwater will take customer feedback to DPIE for consideration.

## Meeting Review and Close

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday 30 March 2021

**Meeting closed:** 2.00pm

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## Murray-Lower Darling Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 25 November 2020

### Carried forward actions

Action No.	Action	Responsibility	Status
MLD1911.01	WaterNSW to liaise with DPIE engagement team to enquire about the possibility of a forum being held early in the new year for customers to discuss their concerns around growth development, deliverability and channel sharing in the Murray.	J Dickson	<p><b>Complete. Response from DPIE (22/7/20) below:</b></p> <p>A consultation document is currently being prepared and this will support detailed engagement in the coming months. This document is aimed at developing a shared understanding of delivery risks. It will summarise the current insights into delivery capacity changes and set out priorities for actions to restore capacity to previous levels. Opportunities for stakeholder discussions in the next months, based on this document, are being explored. An update on opportunities for CAG member involvement will be provided at future meetings of this forum.</p> <p>The NSW Government shares the concerns flagged by WaterNSW customers around growth in development, deliverability and channel sharing in the River Murray. There is a significant body of work being undertaken by joint governments to better understand the underlying reasons for the changes in channel capacity downstream of the choke and a suite of activities to address this and restore lost capacity.</p> <p>At the June 2020 Ministerial Council meeting, it was agreed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the risk of being unable to meet demand downstream of the Barmah Choke is real and increasing due to several factors, including a 20 per cent reduction in river channel capacity over the past 20 years. It impacts irrigators, regional communities and the environment.</li> <li>– New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia will work together to assess the cumulative impacts of new and increased extractions and developments, against an agreed set of principles.</li> <li>– Ministers agreed to commission a feasibility study to explore the options to optimise the capacity of Barmah Choke and</li> </ul>

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			to reduce the risk of delivery shortfall in the Murray River. This work will build on previous studies that have been undertaken to find a cost-effective option which may be acceptable to communities. Governments will work with stakeholders, including communities and water authorities to conduct the feasibility study over the next 18 months and will ensure it considers community support and concerns.
<b>MLD2007.01</b>	WaterNSW to pass on customer feedback to the Taskforce in relation to buried meters and confirm requirements for buried meters (if legal/compliant).	D Swift-Hoadley	<b>Complete.</b> WaterNSW confirmed with DPIE that buried meters can be compliant and are legal. The state-owned meters are maintained under a fleet-based approach which means not all buried meters will be required to be dug up for compliance. A number of each state-owned buried meters will be dug up for compliance to meet the National Measurement Institution (NMI) guidelines of between 3% and 10% to validate the fleet-based approach.
<b>MLD2007.02</b>	WaterNSW to take customer feedback/questions relating to the meter service charge to the Taskforce.	D Swift-Hoadley	<b>Complete.</b> As WaterNSW has now been directed to not transfer the meters, the meter service charge will be ongoing and will be reviewed in conjunction with the IPART determinations. WaterNSW is also working over the coming months with DPIE to understand any implications of the direction to keep ownership of the state-owned meters. As certainty and clarification on the outcomes of WaterNSW continuing the fleet-based maintenance of the state-owned meters is achieved, WaterNSW will communicate with the state-owned meter users.
<b>MLD2007.03</b>	WaterNSW to confirm funding source for maintenance costs at Millewa and Koondrook.	B Mayhew	<b>Complete.</b> Maintenance costs for Barmah-Millewa and Koondrook structures are funded by the MDBA.

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**New actions**

<b>Action No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>MLD2011.01</b>	Confirm with Maintenance Team that they are aware of erosion at the inlet channel structure at Koondrook Perricoota (bank erosion of lead channel off main river to weir structure).	B Mayhew	
<b>MLD2011.02</b>	WaterNSW to provide information on volumes of water that have left the district in permanent trades.	R Cocks / V Kelly	

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