Greater Sydney Customer Advisory Group
Minutes of Meeting

Location: Sydney/MS Teams
Date: 23 March 2022
Time: 9.00am

Present: Peter Griffiths, Matthew Trapp, Paul Rasmussen, Peter Freewater, Gary Wallace, Ashraf, El-Sherbini, Jonathan Dickson, Enrico Proietti, Sonia Townsend, Emma Oates, Megan Brennan, Ben Shallis and Alicia Walters.

The following attended for specific agenda items: Brian Mayhew, Lindy Zaw, Abraham Vedamonickam, Hank Hochfaerber, Russell Cocks, David Swift-Hoadley, Jess Douglas, Alastair McKenzie-McHarg, Hannah Grogan, Kaia Hodge, Ryan Lynn, Irene Zinger, Mark Hamstead, Andrew Richardson.

Meeting Opened: 9.00am.

1. Introduction and Acknowledgement of Country:

1.1 Welcome and introductions:

1.2 Apologies: Toni Hayes

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 Meeting, 28 October 2021:

– Resolved the minutes of meeting held on 28 October 2021 be confirmed as a correct record. Taken as read.

P Rasmussen/P Griffiths
carried

1.6 Actions arising from minutes

– See action sheet attached.

2. Assets:

2.1 Asset Maintenance update (B Mayhew)

– Asset performance and maintenance in Greater Sydney presented and discussed, including routine preventative and corrective maintenance delivery at Warragamba Dam, Upper Canal, Broughton Pass, Nepean, Cataract, Upper Cordeaux, Woronora, Metropolitan catchments, Fitzroy Falls, Wingecarribee Dam, Kangaroo Pipeline and Tallowa Dam

– WaterNSW completed 1856 preventative maintenance work orders and 401 corrective maintenance works orders from December to February.

– Customers sought the average total cost of a pipe breakage repair.

Action GS2203.01: *Average total cost of repair of pipe breakage to be provided to CAG.*
Responsibility: B Mayhew

3. Water System Operations:

3.1 Operations update (B Shallis)

– WaterNSW presented an update on water system operations in Greater Sydney and Fish River including system storage, dam storage, rainfall, inflows, environmental releases, demand and forecast.

  As of 15 March, the total available water held in Greater Sydney storages was 99.8%.

  The intense rain that fell during the first two weeks of March caused all dams in the Greater Sydney system to spill (except Prospect Reservoir, which came very close). This was the most widespread rainfall event for the Greater Sydney system in recent history. As at 15 March, total spill from Warragamba Dam is 1203GL.

  WaterNSW continues to work closely with Sydney Water and NSW Health to make configuration changes in the system to supply the highest quality water available to our customers. High frequency sampling is being conducted in order to monitor water quality parameters at all sites, especially Warragamba Dam, Nepean Dam and Prospect Reservoir.

  With storages exceeding 75%, there were no transfers from the Shoalhaven System and Water Wise Guidelines are in place across Greater Sydney. As total system storage declines with normal supply, it is expected we will reach 75% (the trigger to re-commence Shoalhaven Transfers) in December 2022 at the earliest.

  As at 15 March, the storage level in Oberon Dam is at +0.10m (100%) and slowly rising (more than 100% full). The gauged inflow into the dam is currently at 210ML/d and rising. The current spill rate is approximately 200ML/d. As the adjusted storage is now well above 50%, customers receive full allocation for water accounting calculations.

– For more information, please visit https://www.waternsw.com.au/supply/Greater-Sydney

4. Presentations/Consultation:

4.1 Draft Greater Sydney Water Strategy update (A El-Sherbini)

– Strategy addresses five challenges: Servicing a growing population, building resilience to drought and a changing climate, supporting the economy and jobs, putting water at the heart of our city and communities and improving water management outcomes for Aboriginal people.

– The strategy is required to meet growing demand: Current supply 515-540GL/year, with a broad likely range of future demand and possible future demand well exceeding current availability to supply.

– Rely on dams for 80-85% of current water supply, with Sydney desalination plant providing the remaining 15% of demand when in operation. Important part of strategy is to decrease reliance on rainfall.

– High level overview of potential water security options provided, including conserving more water and using it more efficiently, changing the approach to operation of the Sydney Desalination Plant, investing in a demonstration plant for purified recycled water and investigating portfolios of options for new sources of rainfall-independent supply. Sydney Water and WaterNSW are working together on these options to present to government.

– Customers noted desalination capability currently at 15%, questioning whether capacity can be increased. A El-Sherbini responded that the option for the desalination to be increased to 28% of current supply is being scoped. Estimated time to move to 28% would be approximately 3 years.

– Customers expressed concern over how slowly desalination capability has been developed.

– B Shallis provided an update on management of dam levels and spills.

- Customers questioned why spill notifications for Warragamba Dam are often only issued in the hours immediately prior to a spill commencing. B Shallis responded that if the storage is close to full supply and a forecast for rain has been made, this can be highly variable within a number of hours (i.e. a forecast can double overnight) which means that notifications may need to be issued within a limited timeframe.
- Regional Water Strategies are being presented to each of the CAGs across the state for each valley. It was noted that some Greater Sydney CAG members have interest in other valleys due to their relationships with adjoining catchments. A El-Sherbini to communicate this message back to the Strategy team.

Action GS2203.02: *Regional Water Strategy team to be made aware that some Greater Sydney CAG members have interests in several different valleys due to their relationships with adjoining catchments.*
Responsibility: A El-Sherbini

4.2 Water Reform Implementation Plan (WRIP) update

Non-Urban Metering Reform update – WaterNSW (M Brooks/R Cocks)

- WaterNSW provided an update on the non-urban metering reforms, including a recap on the roll out dates, metering requirements for surface, groundwater and at-risk groundwater sources and what water users need to do to get meter ready.
- Water users **must check the mandatory conditions** on work approvals as they supersede the requirements in the regulations. Use the online Metering Guidance Tool to see if and how the rules apply to you.
- Customers can choose to **make an authorised work inactive** to be exempt from the metering rules. Customers must complete the application form and pay an administration fee. Once inactive, customers will not be able to use their work to take any water, including basic landholder rights. To **make a work active again**, customers will need to submit a new application and provide evidence that the work adheres to the metering regulations, noting that works in 'at-risk' water sources may not be re-approved.
- **All works captured by the metering rules** will need to be fitted with a pattern-approved meter by the regional rollout date. It may be possible to keep an existing meter if it was installed before 1 April 2019. For more information, please refer to the DPE leaflet Non-Urban Water Metering in NSW: what water users need to know.
- Irrigation Australia has a full list of AS4747 pattern-approved meters on its website as well as a list of DQPs in NSW.
- If it is **past your rollout date** and you have not yet started the process, it is vital you begin immediately. If you have taken some action but are still not yet compliant, you must keep records of all communication with your DQP and equipment providers.
- All licensed water users in **at-risk groundwater sources** must meter regardless of the size of your bore. There is a potential regulation change that would allow water users to make a work inactive (exempt from rules) but still take water for BLR. For more information, please refer to *the At-risk Groundwater Sources fact sheet.*
- Water users who connect to telemetry (mandatory and voluntary) will receive a **telemetry rebate** of $975 which is credited against the telemetry fee that is applied to your bill over the next 4 years (the IPART annual telemetry charge is $182-$226 per year). This does not apply to water users with Government-owned meters.
- Recording and reporting requirements presented and discussed.
- WaterNSW will continue to manage the compliance and ongoing maintenance of government-owned meters, including ensuring compliance by the relevant rollout dates. There is an option to transition meters to private ownership if landholders wish to do so.

- WaterNSW is developing a process for customers to inform us if the work installed is smaller than what is specified on your work approval, without the cost of amending the approval (subject to regulatory approval). To see what is listed on your work approval, visit the NSW Water Register.
- **Faulty metering equipment** must be reported within 24 hours by completing the online s91i form.
- There are a number of metering resources available on WaterNSW and DPE's websites to help customers identify their metering requirements to ensure they are meter ready. Please visit www.waternsw.com.au/metering and https://water.dpie.nsw.gov.au/nsw-non-urban-water-metering.
- Customers sought clarification on which is the determined size of a work (ie what is on work approval, size of actual pump installed, or size of meter). WaterNSW advised that the regulations determine that the size is what is listed on a customer's work approval. DPE to provide further detail on this issue during their presentation following.
- Customers asked when an existing meter needs to be validated – can it be done prior to compliance due date? Will it remain valid for a period of time? DPE responded that if works are made compliant with validation certificate from a DQP lodged in the DQP portal, that certificate will be valid for five years (can be validated prior to the due date).

Non-Urban Metering Reform update – DPE (J Douglas)

- There are currently 15 compliant meters available, 5 compatible telemetry devices and over 160 DQPs across NSW (refer https://www.irrigationaustralia.com.au/).
- There are five exemptions that may be applied to non-urban water metering – works solely used to take water under BLR; works that have been made inactive; works that cannot physically comply with the non-urban metering rules; works that are not nominated against an access licence; and small, low-risk works used solely to take water under a licensed S&D access licence. Customers should use the online NSW Metering Guidance Tool to see if exemptions apply to them.
- The Minister has granted a **temporary exemption (233)** from the non-urban metering rules for works that are required to connect to telemetry but cannot because they are in a site that does not receive network coverage. For more information, please use the Telemetry Coverage Tool on DPE's website.
- DPE is developing a Metering and Measurement virtual marketplace tool which connects water users, meter installers and suppliers and includes non-urban and floodplain harvesting (functionality to go live in May).
- **Floodplain Harvesting** regulatory amendments were made in December 2021 however were subsequently disallowed on 24 February 2022. The disallowance means that implementation dates for floodplain harvesting remain uncertain. The department remains committed to the regulation of floodplain harvesting to legal limits set out in NSW water sharing plans and the Basin Plan. For enquiries, please email floodplain.harvesting@dpie.nsw.gov.au
- Customers asked how roadshows will be promoted, with DPE advising that details are still being worked through, with DPE to confirm locations and communicate further details more broadly. Communication mechanisms include email, advertising in local areas, and through water user groups. The CAG noted that many of the water user groups do not hold contact details for their water users. WaterNSW reiterated that due to the Privacy Act, WaterNSW is not able to distribute personal contact information for customers to water user groups.
- Further discussion occurred on communication with customers, with DPE noting around 20,000 letters have been sent out to customers by DPE to date, however communication can only occur

with customers whose details are up to date. The CAG suggested including a direct mailout to customers.

- Customers noted that Council conversed with DPE in 2018 regarding their approval conditions, however some of the conditions which Council believed were included in their approvals were in fact not included, so urged customers to check their licence conditions again.
- Members suggested customers in Greater Sydney are largely uninformed on their metering requirements. WaterNSW responded that the same process is recommended for water utilities in relation to metering requirements: checking approval conditions and using the online metering guidance tool.

4.3 NRAR Compliance update

Regulatory Priorities 2021-22 (D Thomas)

- A principal objective of NRAR is to ensure effective, efficient, transparent and accountable compliance and enforcement measures to support natural resources management legislation. NRAR's regulatory priorities are published to show how and where efforts are focussed to build and maintain public confidence in water management in NSW.
- Enduring and annual priorities presented and discussed, including unauthorised flood works program. There will be a state-wide focus on metering and overdrawn accounts and targeted focus on irrigated agriculture and extraction limits in at-risk water sources in some valleys.
- More information on NRAR's Regulatory Priorities 2021-22 can be found on NRAR's website.

Metering Compliance (G Abood)

- NRAR presented statistics on tranche 1 (2020) compliance rates and its compliance approach for tranche 2 (2021) and tranche 3 (2022) for affected works under the non-urban water metering framework, including state-wide and Far North Coast comparisons. Compliance is reported on active works that are in scope, within the metering threshold for the tranche.
- Tranche 1 compliance in the Far North Coast has remained at 33% (69% state-wide)
- NRAR will visit high volume water users in tranche 2 in early 2022. Each case will be considered on its own merit. There is an expectation that all water users have at least entered into a formal arrangement with a meter installer before their deadline. Alternative pathways will be recognised.
- Tranche 3 compliance involves WaterNSW, DPE Water and NRAR working to ensure widespread awareness with the new rules. Communication channels including advertising, social media and hosting information events will be part of this.
- NRAR has developed an e-tool, NRAR Assist, to help customers find answers to common compliance questions.
- Customers asked what the best first point of call should be to ensure they are compliant. NRAR responded that checking licence conditions, using the online metering tool and making contact with a DQP are the recommended first steps. If a customer has questions specifically relating to licensed areas of irrigation etc, WaterNSW's Water Regulation team would be the point of contact.

4.4 Cold Water Pollution update (A Richardson)

- WaterNSW is required to address cold water pollution (CWP) under some works approvals subject to funding being provided. WaterNSW high priority CWP sites that require mitigation options funding are Copeton, Keepit, Wyangala and Blowering dams.
- WaterNSW sought funding for a CWP mitigation options study for works to improve temperature monitoring in its rural pricing submission to IPART. Funding was approved for 3 high priority sites

(Copeton, Blowering and Keepit) and 3 temperature monitoring sites (Toonumbar, Lostock and Carcoar).

- The CWP mitigation options studies on the three dams will commence March 2022 through to June 2023 with expected outcomes being a robust assessment process, identification of the best CWP solution with the greatest environmental benefit at least whole-life cost and a benchmark to apply to lower priority dams. The CWP temperature monitoring works will occur in FY22-FY24.

4.5 Regulatory Economics – Pricing Determination Engagement update (J Dickson)

Customer Conversations:

- Feedback from the Kitchen Table Kit provided insights that will inform future engagement, with key themes of pricing (including water availability, postage stamp pricing, tariff structure, water accounting), regulatory complexity and licensing (minimum invoice amounts, fees for sleeper licences).
- Future engagement is intended to align with the IPART Engagement Framework and themes received will be used in the next phase. Starting engagement earlier than in the past remains a focus of WaterNSW.

Increasing Transparency:

- Based on customer feedback, WaterNSW is improving the description and breakdown of charges on your bill. Pass-through charges collected by WaterNSW on behalf of MDBA and DBBRC are now listed separately as "other pass-through charges". This change does not impact the overall fees and charges levied against a water licence, only separated to improve transparency. All pass-through charges are determined by IPART.

ACCC Consultation:

- The nine MDB valleys and rural customers in the Fish River Water Supply (FRWS) scheme have been regulated by IPART under the Water Charge (Infrastructure) Rules 2010 (WCIR). The Coastal valleys and urban FRWS customers are regulated by IPART under the IPART Act.
- Following the ACCC review of the WCIR, the Commonwealth Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources accepted the ACCC's advice to return the regulation of bulk water infrastructure charges back to the basin states, which resulted in several amendments to the WCIR in 2020.
- Following these changes, WaterNSW has notified the ACCC that it has been made aware of a matter that may result in WaterNSW ceasing to be subject to Commonwealth legislation. If approved, this would allow IPART to regulate all of WaterNSW's water services under the IPART Act. If not approved, regulation of the MDB valleys will revert to the ACCC for the 2025 Determination.
- Details of the review can be found on the ACCC's website.

4.6 CAG Term of Office (J Dickson)

- WaterNSW made specific mention and thanks to all current members and alternates who have contributed to CAGs over the current term, noting the efforts and service of the Chair. We do appreciate the time an effort made by many to attend and provide feedback on the services provided by WaterNSW.
- The current term of office for WaterNSW CAGs expires on 30 June 2022, with a new term commencing 1 July 2022. Letters have been sent to your nominating organisations inviting nominations for the 2022-25 term.
- If you are considering renominating as a member of the CAG, please contact your nominating organisation to complete your nomination. Nominations close on 14 April 2022.

- Customers discussed the challenges of CAG members communicating information back to their constituents, with WaterNSW noting that in some valleys (eg Lachlan Valley), the water user group represents up to 95% of customers in the valley, and those organisations have worked very hard from a grass roots level to connect with their customers and to establish comprehensive communication mechanisms.
- Customers discussed DPE and NRAR involvement in meetings, with the CAG agreeing that having these agencies attend is valuable.
- Customers suggested a central point (website) to enable all customers to access information on who to contact in their area within the CAG, to enable customers to make contact with their local water user group or CAG member.

4.7 WAVE update (J Dickson)

WAVE – Pilot Coming Soon:

- WaterNSW continues to renew core systems to improve and streamline the way customers transact. A pilot for our new customer portal will launch soon to test functionality with new customers, prior to being extended to existing customers.
- The customer portal will enable customers to access our services at anytime from anywhere, with the opportunity to manage water needs in one place. The portal will be progressively launched throughout 2022, with the first stage being rolled out in March allowing customers to submit new basic landholder rights (BLR) bore applications via the portal.
- Additional functionality being introduced over the next 12 months includes WAL applications, ordering and trading water, viewing water account balances, meter reads, other licensing application types and paying your WaterNSW bills.
- Please visit WaterNSW's Customer Portal page for more information.

4.8 What's New (J Dickson)

Controlled Allocation Order Update

- A new Controlled Allocation Order has been made under section 65 of the WMA 2000, with registrations of interest open from 18 March–18 April 2022.
- A controlled allocation provides a right to acquire a water access licence for a specified water source by auction, tender or other mean specified in an order published in the Government Gazette.
- For more information on Controlled Allocations, or to register your interest, please visit DPE's website.

5. Business Papers:

- Noted and taken as read.

6. General Business:

6.1 Fish River Manganese Issue

- Customers sought an understanding of the manganese issue in the Fish River, including further clarity on who is responsible for dealing with these issues. Manganese has been a recurring issue at Oberon for some time, and Council are happy to deal with the issue at a local level.
- Oberon Council advised it is dealing with pushback from the community regarding water quality, suggesting some information from WaterNSW on the issue could be considered to explain to the community the causes of the water quality issues. WaterNSW responded that some information has been provided on this issue previously, with regular updates on water quality being made available

on the WaterNSW website. WaterNSW is not funded by IPART to undertake a broader community communication piece, however will pass these comments on to the water quality team.

Action GS2203.03: *Suggestion from Greater Sydney CAG to communicate reasons for water quality issues at Oberon more broadly to the community, to be conveyed to the WaterNSW water quality team.*
Responsibility: J Dickson

Meeting Review and Close

Next Meeting: date to be confirmed (July 2022)
Meeting closed: 10.25am

Greater Sydney Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 23 March 2022

Carried forward actions

Action No.	Action	Responsibility	Status
GS2110.01	WaterNSW to include a system map for the Sydney catchment area (Warragamba and metropolitan area) in presentations going forward.	B Mayhew	System maps for catchment areas are available on Water Insights, along with additional information on each catchment.

New actions

Action No.	Action	Responsibility	Status
GS2203.01	Average total cost of repair of pipe breakage to be provided to CAG.	B Mayhew	
GS2203.02	Regional Water Strategy team to be made aware that some Greater Sydney CAG members have interests in several different valleys due to their relationships with adjoining catchments.	A El-Sherbini	
GS2203.03	Suggestion from Greater Sydney CAG to communicate reasons for water quality issues at Oberon more broadly to the community, to be conveyed to the WaterNSW water quality team.	J Dickson	