

Namoi-Peel Customer Advisory Group

Minutes of Meeting
Thursday 22 February 2018
Ibis Styles, 80-90 Ebsworth St, Tamworth

Present: David Phelps (Chair), Bruce Logan, Ian Coxhead, Jon-Maree Baker, Andrew Watson, David Gowing, Ildu Monticone, Brendon Warnock, David Gee, Paul Keyte (Skype), Paul Maisey (Skype), Jonathan Dickson, Craig Cahill, Andrew Richardson, Nahaz Chowdhury and Toni Hayes (minutes).

Ronan Magarahan attended via Skype for agenda item 7.1.

Mark Clayton, Nahaz Chowdhury and Chris Braddock attended for agenda items 8.7-8.9.

Meeting Opened: 11.00am.

Welcome, introductions and safe driving reminder.

1. **Apologies:** Darren Raeck, Tom Woolaston, Lindsay White, David Stockler.

2. **Confirmation of Agenda Items:**

– Nil additional agenda items tabled.

3. **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.

4. **Minutes of Previous Meeting, 18 September 2017:**

– Resolved the minutes of meeting held on 18 September 2017 be confirmed as a correct record. Taken as read.

– Customers questioned detail at agenda item 9.1, "*As a result of the recent Four Corners program, five independent enquiries have been identified (none of which are directed at WaterNSW)*". WaterNSW clarified that it has taken over some activities since the transfer of functions but did not have carriage of these functions at the time of the alleged illegal pumping activity.

*I Coxhead/A Watson
carried*

5. **Actions arising from minutes:**

– See action sheet attached.

6. **Water Delivery**

6.1 **Water System Operations Report (C Cahill)**

– WaterNSW provided an update on the water system operations report, including a flood update – <http://www.waternsw.com.au/customer-service/news/operations>

– Bulk water transfer discussed, including whether there is a need to put additional resources aside in anticipation. WaterNSW will meet with customers and stakeholders to discuss.

- WaterNSW has some work to do at Mollee Weir where the fish passage failed, however corrective work cannot be done until the weir is empty and there is no flow in the river. WaterNSW is investigating why the fish passage failed in order to rectify.
- Customers thanked the Water Operations team for the work they have done this season in what has been a difficult year.

7. System Operation and Asset Services

7.1 Asset Maintenance and Services Update (R Magarahan)

- Asset performance and maintenance in the Namoi and Peel valleys presented and discussed.

8. Presentations/Consultation

8.1 Regulatory Update (J Dickson)

Reform Update

- The final Matthews' Report, MDBA and Ombudsman's reports, were released in November 2017. WaterNSW held a number of meetings with customer groups, including CAG Chairs, in December 2017 to discuss resulting recommendations and seek customer input on key elements in the reports.
- Metering, resource/market information, compliance and protection of environmental flows remain key issues. WaterNSW will also be agitating for other legislative reforms (including making rules, roles and responsibilities clearer). Timeline presented and discussed.
- DOI has established a taskforce to implement the NSW government's action plan to reform water management. There will be a brief intensive period of consultation with tight deadlines. WaterNSW will be making a submission and water users will have the opportunity to engage with the taskforce directly.

Summary of December Workshops

- Summary of feedback from WaterNSW meetings with customers presented and discussed. Key feedback items include compliance, water take measurement, water information and environmental flows.
- Customers believe that "more boots on the ground" has been misinterpreted as compliance and are of the opinion that customers requested more meter reads rather than just compliance. WaterNSW advised that this is a result of a number of customer forums where "presence" was a significant driver. Meter reading is still an active discussion.
- WaterNSW will seek customer support for certain recommendations with a view to alignment with customers. There will be a short period of engagement and WaterNSW will continue to communicate with customers when we know more, including information on the metering standards and pattern approval (as a market participant, we too are waiting on the rule maker).

8.2 Voice of Customer Framework (J Dickson)

- WaterNSW has recently introduced some changes to make things easier for customers and to keep customers informed, including a new layout for WaterNSW invoices, electronic billing and a list of communications customers can subscribe to.
- This week WaterNSW launched "Your Voice", a platform for customers to connect with others and provide feedback and insights into our future products and services. CAG members have been automatically registered for the online community.

8.3 Customer Communications (J Dickson)

Phone/CIMS Update

- Implementation of WaterNSW's new phone system was completed in December 2017.

Conditions Mailout

- On behalf of DOI Water, WaterNSW engaged an external call centre to capture and log queries, which are then allocated to a locally-based Licensing Officer for review/discussion with customers. Given the volume and complexity of conditions across all WSPs, it is unlikely the WaterNSW call centre could cover the scope of all enquiries.
- Licence holders have 28 days to lodge a submission regarding any "discretionary/other" conditions.
- Customers stated concern that there doesn't appear to be any expertise in the call centre and advised that customers will be seeking an extension on the 28 days. WaterNSW encouraged customers to respond within the period noted in the correspondence and outline the process by which the volume of calls are being managed, with water specialists by region being assigned to customer calls once the initial submission had been made.

8.4 Levels of Service (LOS) Project Update (A Richardson)

- Project status update presented and discussed. Formal customer engagement commenced this week with Lachlan CAG members, with a workshop for Namoi-Peel planned for May 2018.
- The workshop will provide an opportunity for targeted consultation with customers about WaterNSW's bulk water services and customer LOS preferences. The main objective is to hear customers' views on LOS issues, identify key LOS gaps in the valleys that need to be addressed, and understand customer long-term LOS priorities/preferences in the valley.
- WaterNSW will contact CAG members with workshop dates and venue options in March 2018.

8.5 Local Water Utility (LWU) Review Update (J Dickson)

- Discussions are ongoing with NSW Health and Local Health Units. The focus over the next few months will be consultation with Local Water Utilities, with outcomes to be incorporated into the review. The monitoring review is due December 2018 with final report due June 2019.

8.6 Update on Carp Herpes Virus (J Dickson)

- The FRDC is leading a project on potential release of the carp herpes virus. WaterNSW has undertaken some research and results are showing a decrease in dissolved oxygen levels, increase in bacteria and potential algal blooms, all of which may have the potential to compromise WaterNSW's ability to deliver suitable water to our customers.
- The FRDC is establishing a number of working groups, which WaterNSW will be involved in. WaterNSW is completing further research to inform an operational response to minimise the impact of the virus on WaterNSW customers.
- Potential timing and release of the virus is proposed for late 2018.
- Customers questioned if any research has been done on the likelihood that the virus could be dangerous to stock. WaterNSW has not undertaken research into this however it may have been done elsewhere.
- Customers are supportive of the release of the virus, ensuring that all clean-up, deals with potential environmental impacts so as not to adversely affect access to irrigators' current entitlements.

8.7 Annual Capital Plan (M Clayton)

- Annual Capital Plan for the Namoi and Peel valleys presented and discussed, including allowance and forecast, Keepit post-tensioning upgrade, projects in progress, new projects, small flow regulator replacement, Keepit Dam coatings project and minor renewals.
- WaterNSW has received approval from NSW Fisheries this week to start moving on the Gunidgera Weir raising project. The commitment to build a fish passage remains, with the regulatory requirement to build once the least cost means is determined. WaterNSW is in the early stages of a study/design feasibility program to determine least cost and once completed, construction of the fish passage will commence. Construction is likely to happen in the next determination.
- Customers reiterated that the raising of the weir is very important to irrigators as it will make a significant impact on their access to water and questioned if this part of the project can commence as soon as possible. WaterNSW advised that this will be looked at and may be able to be initiated earlier.

8.8 Fish Passage Update (M Clayton)

- A Ministerial Taskforce on Fish Passage was established in July 2017 with the objective to capitalise on four significant funding options for restoring fish passage in the Murray-Darling Basin.
- The Taskforce aims to propose a NSW Fish Passage Strategy addressing key matters in the Terms of Reference. An approach was presented to the Minister at the end of 2017 with a number of recommendations. The Minister has now extended the timeline through to the end of 2018 to allow further evaluation and detail opportunities.
- In parallel, a WaterNSW project team has been established to progress feasibility design studies, performance criteria, develop standard designs, apply methodology and provide a statewide estimate. A draft PMP has been prepared and project completion scheduled for end-2019.
- There are currently 9 fish passage obligations remaining across the state.
- Customers stated they are cautious of results from NSW Fisheries and believe their data and knowledge is not robust.

8.9 Cold Water Pollution (CWP) Asset Strategy Update (A Richardson)

- WaterNSW is required under some work approvals to address cold water pollution (CWP), subject to funding availability, with the objective to develop a cold water pollution strategy to quantify benefits of addressing CWP, develop asset solution options and prioritise WaterNSW dams.
- Asset solutions are being developed with a focus on the four priority sites (Copeton, Wyangala, Blowering and Keepit dams). A cost benefit analysis will be undertaken to determine economic viability of the proposed options and dams will be prioritised accordingly.

Burrendong Temperature Curtain Update (M Clayton)

- An update on the Burrendong Temperature Curtain was provided, including background, current status and ongoing testing and assessment. Curtain reinstatement and commissioning is scheduled for completion March/April and once reinstated, WaterNSW will resume monitoring and testing.
- The curtain is a prototype, and assuming it is successful, there is a limited number of structures that it would be feasible on. However where suitable, could be a low cost solution to addressing CWP.

8.10 Regulatory Economics (J Dickson)

WAMC Determination Update

- The current WAMC determination runs through to 2020 with functions split between WaterNSW and DOI Water. New pricing submissions are due by 30 June 2019.
- Recommendations from reviews arising from the Four Corners story and the formation of the new Natural Resource Access Regulator may result in a different resourcing allocation between WaterNSW, DOI Water and other agencies.
- Further guidance on the WAMC Determination will be provided once the resourcing and policy issues arising from this work are settled by government.

Wentworth to Broken Hill Pipeline (W2BHP) Determination Update

- The pipeline will be subject to a new IPART pricing determination. WaterNSW has commenced engagement with customers along the pipeline, including Essential Water.
- WaterNSW is required to submit its pricing proposed to IPART by 30 June 2018. IPART will commence its review of prices of Essential Water's water and sewerage services in Broken Hill at the same time.

Rural Valleys Determination

- The rural valleys determination runs through to 2021, with a new pricing proposal due to IPART on 30 June 2020.
- WaterNSW will continue to seek customer input to expand options for customer choice and will look at whether tariff structures can be improved. Looking to apply greater cost reflectivity, simplicity and incentives for cost savings.
- Updates will be provided to CAGs as work progresses.

Zero Dollar Trades

- WaterNSW has been asked questions around zero dollar trades. 60% of trades during the last water year across the MDB were declared zero dollars as the traded value.
- The basin trading rules require that the seller must notify WaterNSW in writing of the agreed price. WaterNSW recognises that some of these trades are related parties and is looking into its responsibilities in relation to processing trades. Discussed.

9. Reports

Noted and taken as read.

10. General Business

10.1 Dam Wall Debiting (D Phelps)

- Customers noted that at the last Customer Service Committee (CSC) meeting in May 2017, there was an undertaking from WaterNSW to run allocation accounts on true dam wall debiting (meeting held with D Starr and D Stockler). To date there has been no progress and it is clashing with AWD announcements.
- WaterNSW advised that it may appear as though little is happening however there a number of accounting issues that need to be resolved first and is still in progress. This is complex in terms of accounting challenges.
- Customers requested the item remain on the agenda until resolved.

10.2 Meeting schedule and location (D Phelps)

- At the last meeting there was a request to hold four face-to-face meetings per year and customers reiterated this request. WaterNSW advised that as per the CAG Charter, there will be two face-to-face meetings per year, as well as 2 Skype meetings per year, with additional meetings being called as required. CAG Chairs' meetings will also be held twice per year. It is likely meetings will be more frequent leading into a pricing determination.
- Customers requested the next meeting be held in Narrabri. WaterNSW will consider this when looking at venues for the next meeting.

Meeting Review and Close

Next Meeting: 5 June 2018 (Skype)
23 August 2018 (Narrabri)

Meeting closed: 2.30pm

Carried Forward Actions			
Action No. yymm.action no	Action	Responsibility	Status
NP1709.01	Provide information to the Namoi-Peel CAG on the original project plan for raising Gunidgera Weir, including cost estimates and other potential fish passage offsets that might be available.	M Clayton	COMPLETE. Refer to agenda item 8.7.
NP1711.01	WaterNSW to consider providing information on current CFO geographical areas in order for customers to gain an understanding of how many meter readers service each area, how many meters to be read and how often the requirement to read is.	J Dickson	COMPLETE. Refer to agenda item 8.1.

New Actions			
Action No. yymm.action no	Action	Responsibility	Status
	Nil new actions.		