

Border Rivers Customer Advisory Group

Minutes of Meeting

Location: Gateway to Training, 15-21 Russell St, Goondiwindi
Date: 10 September 2026
Time: 9.00am

Present: John Appleby (Chair), John Shannon, Zeb Chapman, Paul Keyte, Angelo Saccon, Lila-Jane Fisher, Matt Roetteler (online), Greg Ringwood and Robert Carter (observer).

WaterNSW: Brendan Maher, Kate Masters, Michelle Yeaman, Vikrant Malik, Partha Saha, Al King, Gavin Inglis, Roger Patricks, Chris Bath and Toni Hayes. Online for specific agenda items: Rob O'Neill, Amanda Fuller and Phil Glastonbury.

External agency representatives: David Towner and Paul Anderson (Sunwater).

Meeting Opened: 9.00am

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

1.1 Acknowledgement of Country

1.2 Apologies: Will Carrigan.

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 Border Rivers CAG Meeting, 19 March 2026

- Resolved the minutes of the meeting held on [19 March 2026](#) be confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting. Taken as read.

1.6 Actions arising from minutes

- Refer to action sheet (attached).

1.7 Election of Chairperson

- John Appleby was nominated by John Shannon, seconded by Angelo Saccon. Nil other nominations received. Accepted and carried.

2. WATERNSW UPDATE:

2.1 WaterNSW Executive update (R O'Neill)

- WaterNSW provided an overview of its new Corporate Strategy, focused on strengthening core operations, diversifying revenue and modernising the organisation to improve efficiency, customer outcomes and long-term affordability.
- Key organisational challenges were noted, including ageing infrastructure, climate variability, reform uncertainty and increasing costs.
- A significant focus is being placed on delivering capital works, including accelerated infrastructure investment, fishway projects, cold water pollution (CWP) initiatives and ongoing asset renewals and investment.
- Diversifying revenue sources is a key strategic priority to help reduce reliance on traditional revenue streams. As the fourth largest landholder in NSW, WaterNSW is exploring opportunities to generate additional revenue from its land holdings, including carbon market opportunities, pumped hydro and long-duration energy storage projects, including potential partnerships with energy providers.

- WaterNSW highlighted opportunities to leverage artificial intelligence, technology and data to improve business processes and customer service, supported by ongoing investment in workforce capability and digital skills.
- Members queried whether WaterNSW can influence or limit the implementation of new policy and regulatory requirements that place additional demands on the organisation. WaterNSW advised that while we seek to influence policy development where possible, we are obligated to implement government-initiated reforms. However, if we don't have funding to do some things, we can refuse. WaterNSW noted that recent initiatives, including the works classification program, have created significant additional workload and resourcing pressures for the business.
- Members asked how customers could support WaterNSW in managing these impacts. WaterNSW encouraged customers to assist by sharing information with landholders, promoting available support services (booking appointments, attending drop-in sessions etc), and advocating for adequate funding and resourcing when new policy initiatives are introduced.
- Members sought clarification on WaterNSW's reliance on water sales to drive revenue. WaterNSW advised that a significant proportion of revenue is variable and therefore influenced by factors such as water availability, climate conditions and customer demand (see also agenda item 2.2).
- WaterNSW noted that IPART pricing assumptions are based on a 20-year rolling average. Any divergence between future climatic conditions and historical averages has the potential to impact revenue outcomes, although revenue volatility mechanisms are in place to help manage this risk (see also agenda item 2.2).

2.2 WaterNSW's Financial Performance (V Malik)

- WaterNSW is committed to improving transparency, accountability and customer engagement under the Rural Valleys determination. A high-level overview of financial performance was presented, including unaudited FY26 results, the FY27 business plan outlook following IPART's final determinations, and key financial risks, assumptions and future considerations. Valley-specific financial performance for the Border Rivers was also provided.
- WaterNSW highlighted improved financial sustainability following the organisational transformation program and final IPART determinations. Financial performance has improved substantially, with Rural Valley finances more sustainable than previously forecast. Government affordability contributions remain important to future sustainability and infrastructure investment remains a high priority.
- The determination strengthens WaterNSW's financial position, supporting ongoing service delivery, infrastructure investment and access to funding.
- WaterNSW provided an overview of the Border Rivers financial outlook, noting that while FY26 performance was impacted by lower government contributions and restructuring costs, the latest IPART determination is expected to improve cost recovery, affordability and long-term financial sustainability.
- Border Rivers is forecast to return to profitability from FY27, supported by increased government contributions, customer subsidies and improved revenue recovery arrangements. Water usage remains a key revenue driver, with around 60% of revenue linked to usage charges.
- Ongoing investment in infrastructure is expected to increase the regulated asset base through FY29, with capital works including the Pindari Dam Low Level Gate Valve Refurbishment project supporting long-term asset reliability and service delivery.
- Members queried the extent of land that is available in the Border Rivers to generate additional revenue. Taken on notice.

Action BR2609.01: WaterNSW to advise CAG members of available landholdings in the Border River that has potential to generate additional revenue.

Responsibility: R O'Neill

- Members stated that the current pricing engagement process appears significantly different to previous determinations and sought clarification on the key changes. WaterNSW advised that the

previous pricing review process was guided by IPART's customer engagement requirements, including application of the Three Cs framework, and involved extensive consultation with customers.

- Customers requested greater transparency and more regular financial reporting during consultation on the current determination and in response WaterNSW has committed to providing annual updates on financial performance to Customer Advisory Groups.

3. OPERATIONS:

3.1 Regional Operations (M Yeaman/R Patricks)

- WaterNSW provided an overview of the Border Rivers Capital Works Program for FY26-29, including priority and deferred projects in the valley. Of 20 identified projects, 17 renewals and dam safety projects were included in the program, with 14 renewal projects and 3 dam safety projects prioritised. Three renewal projects were deferred.
- Government funding uncertainty for environmental planning and dam safety works may require some projects to be paused in future years.
- Key priority projects include dam safety works, electrical safety improvements, hydrometric renewals, PLC/RTU upgrades and asset renewals at Pindari Dam.
- WaterNSW provided an overview of Pindari Dam net inflow calculations. Inflows are derived from changes in storage volume and release volumes. The calculation has limitations due to storage gauge accuracy, wind and wave effects, evaporation, rainfall and prolonged low-flow conditions.
- WaterNSW advised that periods where net inflows were not displayed on WaterInsights were associated with very low or no upstream flows and the manual nature of the inflow calculation process. A review of daily operational reporting requirements is underway as part of operational modernisation.
- An overview of the accuracy of Border Rivers gauging stations was presented. WaterNSW advised it aims to maintain published flow accuracy within $\pm 10\%$ and continues to review and update site ratings and cease-to-flow levels as conditions change.
- Members noted that a 10% variance can represent a significant amount of water, particularly at higher flow rates. WaterNSW advised we try to be as accurate as possible and look at gauges up and down stream of a site if discrepancies are identified.
- Each site has a unique rating based on location, flow height etc, which are measured periodically. The measurement is correct on that day only and can vary between measurements due to a variety of factors such as debris, vegetation and changing channel conditions. Flow data is provided using the best information at the time.
- Members questioned if there are any plans for new gauges, particularly upstream in times of flood. WaterNSW advised we are not looking to add gauges however there is a national [Flood Warning Infrastructure Network \(FWIN\) Program](#), led by BOM, that is focussed on upgrading or acquiring high priority rain or river gauges, particularly in high risk areas. The community is encouraged to get involved in this program.
- WaterNSW outlined its gauging station visitation program, noting a target of 6 visits per site per year, adjusted according to flow conditions, operational priorities and stakeholder needs. The program uses a risk and criticality-based approach to determine visitation frequencies and monitoring priorities across the network.

3.2 Pamamaroo Inlet Regulator Project Upgrade (M Yeaman)

- WaterNSW advised that the MDBA and Basin Officials Committee have agreed on the inflow management framework for the project, including decision-making processes and cost-sharing arrangements associated with temporary works.
- Procurement is progressing through a three-stage process. Expressions of Interest have been completed, Stage 2 tender submissions closed on 17 August 2026, and a Request for Tender will be issued to the three shortlisted proponents in late September 2026. Development of the final Business Case is continuing alongside procurement activities.

- Subject to lake conditions and unforeseen events, site mobilisation is expected to commence in January 2027, with construction scheduled for completion by November 2027. Final site handover is anticipated in January 2028.
- Members queried whether the active storage trigger at Pamamaroo Regulator would return from 250GL to 195GL once the regulator is repaired. WaterNSW advised this is not expected to occur. It was noted that storage levels are anticipated to fall below 250GL in October, at which point operations will revert to the arrangements outlined under the S324 order.

3.3 Pindari Bubble Plume update (C Bath)

- WaterNSW provided an update on the Pindari Bubble Plume Project. Positive early trial results have been seen, with monitoring showing improved reservoir mixing and warmer bottom-water temperatures, helping address cold water pollution impacts downstream and algal problems.
- The Bubble Plume will commence again in September/October for the spring and summer seasons. Ongoing trials and monitoring will continue through 2026-27, with findings to inform future opportunities at other sites. The energy offsets are expected to be in place and operational by end 2026.

3.4 Water Planning and Delivery (P Saha)

- WaterNSW presented a review of operations in the Border Rivers, including rainfall and weather outlook, inflows, overview of the water resource monitoring dashboard and drought flood risk index, storage status, allocation and account balances, current conditions and operational plan.
- Continued dry conditions exist across the catchment with current conditions comparable to the beginning of the 2018-19 drought, with no inflows recorded at Pindari Dam since January 2026 and Glenlyon Dam since October 2025.
- A resource assessment shortfall of approximately 20.3GL was reported, with no further General Security AWDs able to be made until shortfall accounts are replenished.
- Seasonal forecasts indicate below-average spring rainfall is likely across the Border Rivers catchment, although rainfall outlooks improve for the October to December period.
- Storage forecasts suggest that, under minimum inflow conditions, Pindari and Glenlyon dam storage levels may decline to levels similar to those experienced during June 2019 by the end of the season, however a significant rainfall event could materially improve the outlook.
- The Border Rivers has been assessed by NSW DCCEEW as being in Stage 2 (emerging drought or water shortage) under the Extreme Events Policy, indicating water delivery may not be possible under normal operating arrangements.
- Members sought clarification on the potential timing of progression to Stage 3 or Stage 4 drought response arrangements. WaterNSW advised that current planning assumptions are based on minimum inflow forecasts and that escalation is not currently anticipated. If inflows do not occur over the coming months, further discussions with the Department may be required regarding future drought response measures.
- Members queried how consultation and decision-making would occur if Stage 3 restrictions become necessary. WaterNSW advised that Technical Advisory Group discussions with the department have already commenced under Stage 2. Should Stage 3 be triggered, restrictions in Water Sharing Plans and additional management measures under S324 orders may be considered. WaterNSW confirmed that the CAG would remain the primary customer consultation forum, with additional meetings convened as required and other stakeholders invited where appropriate.
- Planned operational measures for the upcoming irrigation season includes requesting early ordering by water users for forward planning, potentially shortening the irrigation season to February 2027, implementing group or block deliveries if required, maintaining water supplies for town water and critical human needs, and adapting operations in response to inflows and seasonal conditions. Members urged WaterNSW to be proactive with water releases and speak to all customers along the river.

- Members queried whether greater flexibility could be provided when water orders need to be amended, including the option of dealing directly with river operators. WaterNSW advised that customer-requested changes must continue to be processed through the Customer Service Centre to meet reporting and compliance requirements. Where operational changes are initiated by WaterNSW, staff will liaise directly with affected customers and coordinate any required amendments through the Customer Service Centre. Water Planning and Delivery will work proactively with the Customer Service Centre to support timely processing of order adjustments.
- Members highlighted potential implications of block releases, noting concerns that any losses associated with the releases for the downstream section will be socialised. Members emphasised the importance of proactive communication to ensure all affected customers are aware of planned delivery arrangements and have sufficient opportunity to capture water. WaterNSW advised that only a limited number of small block releases are being considered downstream of Kanowna to Mungindi section at this stage and will be carefully managed. Members agreed that all parties should work proactively to minimise delivery losses.
- Members sought clarification on water availability for smaller upstream users later in the irrigation season, noting many will not require water until March-May and have limited capacity for on-farm storage. WaterNSW advised that deliveries will continue where water is available however, if conditions deteriorate and supplies become insufficient to meet critical human needs, the Department may consider progressing to Stages 3/4.
- It was agreed that ongoing discussion and additional stakeholder engagement would be important if conditions worsen, with members requesting further meetings involving the CAG and other stakeholders should more severe drought response measures become necessary. Members agreed that an online update session should be scheduled for late October.

Action BR2609.02: WaterNSW to coordinate stakeholder engagement and arrange an online water planning and delivery update session for customers and stakeholders in late October, subject to seasonal conditions and operational requirements.

Responsibility: C Bath

- Border Rivers operational updates are available at [WaterInsights](#).

4. CUSTOMER OPERATIONS AND EXPERIENCE:

4.1 Customer Assessments and Approvals (A Fuller)

- WaterNSW provided an overview of customer service standards, and updates on classifying works, end of water year trade submissions and third party consent for temporary trades.
- Application processing times have increased in some areas due to resources being redirected to support the statewide works classification program. WaterNSW has engaged additional temporary staff and improvements are expected by October 2026.

Floodplain Strikeforce

- WaterNSW provided an update on the work of the Floodplain Strikeforce, including customer education initiatives, updated guidance materials, historical works review, publication of flood work application data and improved pre-application processes.
- A draft Floodplain Strikeforce Interagency Action Plan was released in March for consultation and feedback, and a dedicated working group has been established to review feedback and identify key barriers and potential solutions. The action plan and accompanying What We Heard report is available on our website [here](#).
- A [guide for applying for a flood work approval](#) has been developed by WaterNSW and NSW DCCEEW to assist landowners understand what a flood work is, when an approval is required and what is required to apply for a flood work approval.
- A separate flood work approval is no longer required where an existing work is specifically nominated under a Water Supply Work Approval (or combined approval) and its primary purpose is water supply.

Works Classification Program

- An update on the [works classification program](#) and improvements made in response to customer feedback was provided, including additional guidance materials and support through the WaterNSW website. Customers can also [book an appointment](#) with WaterNSW staff for assistance throughout the classification process.
- Feedback on the [Customer Portal](#) has been shared with our technology teams and improvements are being prioritised based on customer needs.
- Customers are encouraged to review the details of works listed on their approvals and contact WaterNSW if updates are required prior to classifying works.
- Members stated customers are still struggling to identify the number assigned to the work in the letter from WaterNSW to its location. WaterNSW is aware of these issues and customers are encouraged to book an appointment with licensing staff for assistance.

Temporary Trades

- WaterNSW advised that the earlier end-of-water-year temporary trade submission deadline introduced this year improved processing outcomes and is expected to remain in place for future years and will be proactively communicated to customers going forward.
- June is the highest volume month in the water year, and a new approach was needed to ensure all applications could be processed in time without increasing operational and financial pressures.

Third-Party Consent

- No final decision has yet been made regarding potential discontinuation of temporary trade third-party consent for groundwater, as discussed at the previous meeting. Any future changes would be supported by a comprehensive communications and implementation process.

5. BUSINESS PAPERS (taken as read):

- Taken as read.

6. GENERAL BUSINESS:

6.1 H5N1 Avian Influenza (B Maher)

- WaterNSW provided an update on the detection of H5 avian influenza in wild birds across multiple Australian states.
- WaterNSW is working with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) to monitor the situation and ensure appropriate preparedness measures are in place. DPIRD is the lead response agency in NSW.
- WaterNSW has developed operational response protocols, identified higher-risk sites and is assessing potential impacts on water quality and water supply operations and is collaborating with DCCEEW on management strategies for priority wildlife locations, including Lake Brewster and the Menindee Lakes.

6.2 Town Water Risk Reduction Program (B Maher)

- WaterNSW is supporting Local Water Utilities (LWUs) across regional NSW to strengthen raw water quality risk management through the Town Water Risk Reduction Program (TWRRP). Funded by NSW DCCEEW, the program supports regional communities in managing water quality risks and building long-term drinking water resilience.
- WaterNSW leads the source water component of the program, focusing on identifying raw water quality risks and supporting local water utilities to proactively manage those risks at the source, recognising source water protection as the first and most effective barrier to safe drinking water.
- To learn more about TWRRP, please visit our [website](#) or email info.TWRRP@waternsw.com.au

6.3 WaterInsights update – customised reporting (P Glastonbury)

- WaterNSW provided a live demonstration of new WaterInsights features introduced in response to customer feedback, including customised daily river reports, daily email and SMS reports sent directly to them based on user-defined parameters, and scheduled notifications.
- Members discussed the planned replacement of the current DAS platform. WaterNSW advised the new system is still approximately 18-months away. Members expressed interest in participating in user testing opportunities to help ensure the new platform is practical, user-friendly and fit for purpose from the beginning. WaterNSW will be ready to start internal testing from March to June, then will do some stakeholder testing.

Action BR2609.03: WaterNSW to coordinate a meeting with customers and the Digital Applications and Solutions team to discuss potential enhancements to the DAS dashboard.

Responsibility: C Bath

Meeting review and close:

Next meeting: Date TBC

Meeting closed: 12.40pm

Border Rivers Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 10 September 2026

New actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
BR2609.01	WaterNSW to advise CAG members of available landholdings in the Border River that has potential to generate additional revenue.	R O'Neill	
BR2609.02	WaterNSW to coordinate stakeholder engagement and arrange an online water planning and delivery update session for customers and stakeholders in late October, subject to seasonal conditions and operational requirements.	C Bath	
BR2609.03	WaterNSW to coordinate a meeting with customers and the Digital Applications and Solutions team to discuss potential enhancements to the DAS dashboard.	C Bath	

Carried forward actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
BR2509.01	WaterNSW to liaise with Water Planning and Delivery and BRFF to identify key contacts and reach out to water user groups in the Border Rivers to discuss membership to the CAG.	C Bath	Ongoing.
BR2603.01	CAG members to provide a list of QLD gauging sites they would like included on WaterInsights and WaterNSW will investigate.	CAG members	Complete. Sites available in WaterInsights.