

Border Rivers Customer Advisory Group

Minutes of Meeting

Location: Gateway to Training, 15-21 Russell St, Goondiwindi

Date: 19 March 2026

Time: 9.00am

Present: John Appleby (Chair), John Shannon, Angelo Saccon, Greg Ringwood, Natalie Young (online), Zarni Bear (online).

WaterNSW: Brendan Maher, Ashley Webb, Michelle Yeaman, Ken Gee, Al King, Chris Shaw, Gavin Inglis and Toni Hayes. Online for specific agenda items: Amanda Fuller, Daniel Kemp.

Agency and external staff: Matthew Gordos (NSW Fisheries)

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, 11 September 2025

– Resolved the minutes of the meeting held on [11 September 2025](#) be confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting. Taken as read.

1.6 Actions arising from minutes

– Refer to action sheet (attached).

2. WaterNSW update:

2.1 WaterNSW update and Land & Water Operations overview (R O'Neill)

– WaterNSW provided an update on its new operating model and status of the business transformation program. The labour reduction process has concluded with approximately 280 FTE roles removed, primarily affecting metropolitan areas, senior and middle management, and corporate functions.

– The Land and Water Operations portfolio structure was outlined, with priorities including improving end-to-end collaboration and process improvements, strengthening consistency in customer engagement, maintaining service levels despite resourcing changes, embedding teams and supporting team morale.

– Top of mind items for the Border Rivers CAG for our team were discussed, including floodplain harvesting and flood work approvals, trade rules and restrictions, northern basin connectivity program, Menindee trigger restrictions, MDBA review and metering compliance.

– Service levels discussed. Members haven't noticed a change but stated recent interactions with WaterNSW had good follow up.

– Members queried the estimated savings from staff reductions. Savings include 280 FTE, with capex deferred. Budget figures will be presented at the September CAG (see agenda item 4.5).

- Members questioned what historical changes to the business model have occurred over the past 10 years that have driven costs. They subsequently raised concern about the organisation's ability to be sustainable in the long-term if costs continue to rise at the same rate.

3. Customer Services:

3.1 Water Accounting & Metering (G Inglis)

- WaterNSW provided an overview of iWAS, highlighting its key functions, including how customers can manage their water accounts, view meter data, and enter meter reads. An outline of the Data Acquisition Service (DAS) dashboard and its reporting capabilities was also provided.
- [iWAS](#) is WaterNSW's online water accounting platform, giving regulated, unregulated and groundwater customers easy, anytime access to their water accounts. A range of instructional videos and user guides is available on the WaterNSW website.
- The [DAS](#) provides customers with real-time visibility of their water usage. It allows users to view meter reads in hourly increments, monitor telemetry battery health, view alarms, and export their own data. As a result of customer feedback, the DAS is now accessible directly through iWAS.
- To create a DAS account, please reach out to customer.helpdesk@waternsw.com.au for assistance in setting up your account.
- Members queried if the system accommodates entry for meter creep. WaterNSW advised there are ongoing issues with some meter types (Mace, Pulse). If customers encounter issues with account balances, please contact our Water Accounting team.
- Discussion occurred on the differences between Modbus and Pulse LIDs. Pulse is notorious for creeping and is prone to installation issues (calibration) and interference from pumps (might miss a pulse or gain a pulse). WaterNSW has been working with DQPs to upskill and has quality assurance checkpoints in place to ensure the correct data is getting through to the DAS from all telemetry types.

3.2 Floodplain Harvesting Engagement (C Shaw)

- An overview of the floodplain harvesting (FPH) processes and challenges to date was provided, including classification of works, naming conventions and identifying correct works/storages. WaterNSW has commenced an audit of licences that have been issued and approved and is working with DQPs, surveyors and customers to ensure all data is correct in the first instance.
- Data is being provided to NRAR on customers WaterNSW has engaged with, so they are identified as being on a pathway to compliance.
- WaterNSW recognises the challenges customers face in becoming compliant with the NSW Floodplain Harvesting (FPH) Policy and is committed to providing tailored support. WaterNSW proposes to visit each valley to engage directly with customers to help them understand the FPH policy and requirements, identify and classify FPH works, understand the DAS and iWAS, nominate FPH measurement periods and liaise with DQPs and surveyors.
- Representatives will share the proposal with members and advise WaterNSW if there is interest. Further information will be provided once dates are confirmed.

3.3 Customer Assessments & Approvals (A Fuller)

- WaterNSW provided an overview of agency roles within the water sector, customer service standards (actual vs target) for applications and approvals, a proposal to change the end-of-year final submission date for temporary trades, and consultation on a proposal to discontinue the third-party consent process for temporary groundwater trades.
- WaterNSW continues to meet or exceed customer service standards for applications and approvals in most areas, with performance standards monitored monthly.
- WaterNSW is working with NSW DCCEEW on a proposal to change the final submission date to lodge end of year temporary trades to 20 June and sought feedback from members (nil received). Customers will be notified in advance if the change occurs. Members were also reminded that the customer service standard for temporary trades is 90% processed within 5 business days.

- Feedback was sought from CAG members on a proposal to discontinue the groundwater temporary trade third-party consent process, which was reinstated on 1 July 2024. Since reintroduction, WaterNSW has only approved 8 temporary trades (<0.2%) where a third party has consented to potential impacts on their water take.
- WaterNSW has received numerous complaints about the process, including concerns from customers who are reluctant to contact potentially impacted bore holders and from bore holders who lack the expertise to determine whether they should consent. There is also ambiguity under the *Water Management Act* regarding whether WaterNSW is lawfully permitted to seek consent in this way.
- Feedback on the proposal to discontinue can be provided via email to engagement@waternsw.com.au.
- Members expressed frustration with the Customer Portal and questioned the need for multiple portals. WaterNSW advised this is due to legacy data and source systems (where the data is coming from). The intention is for the Customer Portal to be the single source of truth for customer data however there is still a way to go. The portal is an ongoing program of work and WaterNSW welcomes any feedback on how the platform can be improved for customers.

3.4 Flood Works, Floodplain Management Plans and Strikeforce (R O'Neill)

- An explanation of a flood work, [flood work approvals](#) and Floodplain Management Plans (FMP) was provided, including what constitutes a flood work and when a flood study is required. An outline of the recently established Floodplain Strikeforce (between WaterNSW and NSW DCCEE) was also provided.
- WaterNSW acknowledged the complexity of this area and reaffirmed its commitment to supporting customers through the process. This includes offering optional pre-application meetings to discuss proposed works, provide general guidance on assessment requirements, and help determine whether a flood study is needed before an application is lodged and fees are paid.
- An interagency working group between WaterNSW and NSW DCCEE has been formed to address stakeholder concerns and strengthen implementation of FMPs. A [Floodplain Strikeforce Interagency Action Plan](#) has been developed for consultation, proposing eight theme areas and 37 agreed actions aimed at improving processes, guidance, systems and tools to assist landholders with flood work approval applications and assessments.
- Feedback on the Action Plan can be submitted to engagement@waternsw.com.au by 24 April.
- In partnership with NSW DCCEE, WaterNSW has developed a Flood Work Implementation Guideline which will provide additional information on the FMP, what constitutes a flood work, how to apply, the assessment process and free mapping tools. It is estimated this will be published in May 2026.
- WaterNSW will also publish monthly data on flood work application volumes, determination outcomes and the number of outstanding applications on a dedicated online dashboard. Members stated data to a valley level would be very good to see how the valley is tracking.
- For more information go to <https://www.waturnsw.com.au/customer-services/water-licensing/flood-work-approvals>.

4. OPERATIONS:

4.1 Water Planning & Delivery (K Gee)

- 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 and allocation and usage.
- The irrigation season has finished, with ~64GL General Security (A class 5.8GL and B class 58.3GL) water used to February 2026; ~48GL of supplementary water used (mostly during July–August 2025 events).
- General Security B class received 26% AWD.
- A stimulus flow was delivered from 13 August–1 December from Pindari Dam.
- A Boomi replenishment flow was delivered during December 2025 –January 2026 from Pindari Dam. This is done in consultation with landholders and is primarily a stock and domestic replenishment flow.

- The system remains dry with no significant inflows into the dams. The BoM rainfall outlook also indicates below average rainfall over the next three months.
- Winter releases will depend on demand and will likely be pulse releases. WaterNSW will keep the weirs topped up but won't consistently run the river. Boggabilla Weir will be drawn down for the winter months, starting around June. It is currently naturally drawing down with the fishway open.
- Next season will likely be order on demand. At this stage WaterNSW can fulfil volumes of current allocation next season, dependent on conditions. Past next season there will not be much in accounts to deliver.
- Operational updates are available at [WaterInsights](#).

4.2 Pamamaroo Inlet Regulator update (D Kemp)

- WaterNSW provided an overview and update on the project, including project drivers, benefits and objectives, key issues and long-term solutions, remedial works, temporary and permanent works approach, water management and project timeline.
- Adverse conditions have caused significant movement and cracking of the Pamamaroo Inlet Regulator structure over many years, which could lead to failure of the structure if normal operations continue.
- Remedial work includes installing temporary coffer dams, new deeper sheet piling and concrete, structural work on the inlet regulator and the surrounding surfaces and will ensure the regulator remains serviceable and protect it from further damage, so that normal operations can continue.
- The structure is currently operating under restrictions including reduced operational measures to limit differential water levels and increased surveillance and monitoring as a short-term measure to reduce the risk of failure.
- It is expected work will commence mid-2026, with 3 months to construct the temporary works and 6-8 months to complete permanent works (weather dependent). RL59.87 at Wetherell has been selected as the trigger level to commence work.
- WaterNSW is confident that the project will remain within the current cost estimates.

4.3 Pindari Dam Cold Water Pollution Project (Bubble Plume) update (D Kemp/M Gordos)

- WaterNSW provided an updated on the Pindari Dam Cold Water Pollution (CWP) Project, which involves destratification by bubble plume aeration, including project progress and results observed to date.
- The electrical scope of works is currently being finalised, with the project on track for practical completion around June 2026.
- The bubble plume will be operational for 6-8 months of the year over summer and will not impact water releases as it operates independent of dam operations.
- Part of the project includes securing a sustainable power source and WaterNSW is working with the department and NSW Fisheries on this. A connection to the AGL system was not possible as they are on separate grids and the system can only connect to the incoming supply from the Ashford transformer.
- The project, funded by NSW Fisheries, is initially being trialled at Pindari Dam and if successful WaterNSW will consider feasibility of implementing the technology at other dams, including Copeton, Burrendong and Keepit. As part of the funding arrangement for this site, any savings achieved within the funding envelope can be reinvested at other sites. Some savings have already been realised for an initial business case for these three dams, positioning further funding when/if available.
- An overview of results to date was presented and discussed. Members queried if monitoring is being undertaken to assess impacts on algal blooms. NSW Fisheries advised that the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) is looking at a range of water quality parameters, including algae.

4.4 Regional Operations (M Yeaman)

- Jerome Douziech has been appointed the new Executive General Manager of Built Infrastructure and commenced on 2 February 2026. He is planning to attend the next round of CAGs.

- An overview of the regional Water Monitoring team and Maintenance team under the new structure was provided. The Pindari and Moree maintenance teams have consolidated with the Copeton team; the Moree water monitoring team has consolidated with the Armidale team; the current CFO Adam Schubert is part of the Water Monitoring team but retained as a discrete specialist function.

4.5 Finance update (B Maher)

- As part of its submission to IPART, WaterNSW committed to providing clearer visibility to customers on WaterNSW's financial performance and transparency of charges, including at a valley level.
- WaterNSW proposes to share an updated view of performance relative to revenue, as previously shared with CAGs during the pricing engagement, using the most current financial information, to support transparency and ongoing engagement (examples provided and feedback sought).
- The discussion is intended to provide broader context on how economic conditions and management decisions are influencing financial outcomes, rather than focusing solely on short-term performance alone.
- WaterNSW is also keen to hear customer perspectives on the importance of long-term financial sustainability and how this should inform future planning.

5. Presentations/Consultation:

5.1 WaterNSW WaterInsights app (P Glastonbury)

- WaterNSW has released its new WaterInsights app, available for Android users in the Google store (Apple to come). The app was tested by ~50 users, including some CAG members, and has the same functionality as the previous Water Live app. It is the fastest platform for real-time data.
- An overview of the key features was presented and discussed. The app is built from the website, and data for most sites is produced every 15 minutes.
- WaterNSW encourages everyone to use the app and provide feedback via a direct feedback loop in the app. This is the first iteration, so we are keen to hear from customers on what is useful and what isn't.
- The WaterLive App will eventually be retired, scheduled for late 2026, once customers have had an opportunity to download and adopt the new WaterInsights App.
- The Real Time Data (RTD) website and the WaterInsights online portal will continue to operate as they do today, providing reliable access to water data and information.
- The daily river report in RTD is available on the WaterInsights website (almost identical) and WaterNSW is looking to incorporate into the app.
- Members questioned what sites produce data every 15 minutes compared to the daily reads. WaterNSW advised it is primarily based on criticality, however if there is an important site that is not getting frequent data, please let us know. Most of the sites identified by BoM produce data every 15 minutes.
- WaterNSW is looking to add 26 QLD (DERM) sites to WaterInsights. If a site is owned by the QLD government, we can look to add however this can't be done for private or Council owned sites.

Action BR2603.01: CAG members to provide a list of QLD gauging sites they would like included on WaterInsights and WaterNSW will investigate.

Responsibility: CAG members

6. BUSINESS PAPERS (taken as read):

- Taken as read.

7. GENERAL BUSINESS:

7.1 CAG Survey Results (B Maher)

- The CAG survey at the end of the last round provided positive results, with ~50 members responding:
 - separating WaterNSW and NSW DCCEEW agenda items was valuable, with positive feedback received;
 - presenting online is suitable for short presentations (up to 20 minutes) however in person presentations are valued by customers where possible and provide better outcomes, understanding and discussion;

- discussion of proposed policy and current policy are vital for both users and implementors;
 - it is important for NSW DCCEEW to host an afternoon session and that should continue; the separation will help clarify the roles of WaterNSW and NSW DCCEEW.
- WaterNSW reiterated that additional online CAG meetings are available to members at any time throughout the year as required, provided 50% of members agree.

7.2 Exploration licenses issued to mines

- Members highlighted recent exploration licenses issued to mines in the valley, and voiced concerns that additional water taken will stress the river system even more and put pressure on the WSP.
- WaterNSW advised this is an issue for NSW DCCEEW and customers should raise in the afternoon session following the CAG. It is a harvestable rights issue for the department at a policy level with potential to effect unregulated users, as well as less run off into the system.

7.3 Licensing

- Members raised issues with amalgamating licenses, stating some approvals are still not sorted after 4 years. WaterNSW advised customers can [book an appointment](#) with WaterNSW to discuss water licensing enquiries. Phone appointments are available Monday-Thursday, and face-to-face appointments are available every Tuesday.

Meeting review and close:

Next meeting: 10 September 2026

Meeting closed: 12.10pm

Border Rivers Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 19 March 2026

New actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
BR2603.01	CAG members to provide a list of QLD gauging sites they would like included on WaterInsights and WaterNSW will investigate.	CAG members	

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.