

Border Rivers Customer Advisory Group

Minutes of Meeting

Location: Gateway to Training, 15-21 Russell St, Goondiwindi
Date: 11 September 2025
Time: 9.00am

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

WaterNSW: Brendan Maher, Kate Masters, Ken Gee, Michelle Yeaman, Partha Saha (online), Al King, Chris Bath, Sonia Townsend (online) and Toni Hayes. Online for specific agenda items: Andrew George, Hetal Parma, Russell Cocks, Ben Arabin, Krystle Moore, Martin Brooks, Sonia Townsend,

Agency and external staff: David Towner (Sunwater)

Meeting Opened: 9.00am

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

1.1 Acknowledgement of Country

1.2 Apologies: Nil received.

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 2025

- Resolved the minutes of the meeting held on [19 March 2025](#) be confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting. Taken as read.

J Appleby / A Saccon (carried)

1.6 Actions arising from minutes

- Refer to action sheet (attached).

2. INTRODUCTION TO CAGs:

2.1 Election of Chairperson

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

2.2 Overview of Customer Advisory Groups (B Maher)

- WaterNSW provided an overview of Customer Advisory Groups, including agency roles in the water sector, CAG member roles and responsibilities, standard agenda items and CAG format and schedule. An overview of the CAG Charter and CAG Code of Conduct was also provided.
- CAG members represent WaterNSW customers in their valley. Input should be representative of members of your nominating organisation and reflect a broader contribution of all customers you represent. Members have an obligation to provide regular feedback to the water users they represent.
- Meetings will be in person twice per year (March/April and August/September) with the option of additional meetings online if required or requested. Schedules may alter to accommodate other engagement needs as required. All members are encouraged to attend in person.
- WaterNSW will hold the CAG meeting in a morning session, focusing on WaterNSW agenda items and customer issues, followed by an afternoon session led by NSW DCCEEW, focusing on policy, programs and

emerging priorities. Members are encouraged to suggest relevant agenda topics for consideration for both sessions via the Chairperson.

- Discussion occurred around low membership and meeting attendance, with members stating it would be beneficial for WaterNSW to attend water user AGMs to speak about WaterNSW's role, the CAGs and why they are important for water users. WaterNSW will reach out again to water user groups who previously had membership to the CAG to garner interest in attending the next meeting with a view to renominating.

Action 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.

Responsibility: C Bath

3. WATERNSW UPDATE:

3.1 Chief Executive Officer (CEO) update (A George)

- Following the IPART determinations for Rural Valleys and Greater Sydney and WAMC, WaterNSW is in a financial position that requires a fundamental reset of the business. IPART's pricing decision means WaterNSW faces a significant revenue shortfall and insufficient operating cost (opex) allowance to cover our current cost base and obligations. Without significant action, the business risks insolvency within 18 months.
- An overview of WaterNSW's cost drivers was presented and discussed, including numerous non-commercial functions (fishways, environmental flows, water quality monitoring, land management), a small and shrinking customer base and complex regulatory obligations. A number of non-commercial programs have been paused given the lack of funding (eg fishways). It is recognised we have obligations, however there is no funding to undertake the work if it is not a core function.
- The Board has approved a business restructure to maintain financial sustainability and solvency, which includes a reduction of approximately 300 employees (similar to staff numbers in 2021). Teams will be consolidated, and several functions will be centralised or discontinued to streamline how we work and to reduce duplication. Formal consultation is underway with our people and their representatives about the proposed changes.
- An overview of the proposed future state operating model was presented and discussed. WaterNSW moved to the new structure in early September, with employee impacts and changes expected to conclude by the end of October. WaterNSW is focussed on maintaining a regional presence.
- WaterNSW will work hard to limit customer impacts throughout the transition period, however we may be unable to continue delivering some of our current functions, activities and projects in the same way. The most noticeable impact will be on planned capital projects, not front-line services.
- Members questioned what the restructure means in terms of job cuts in the regions, noting the Border Rivers has not had a Customer Field Officer (CFO) for 18 months. WaterNSW advised the CFO based in Moree has been servicing the valley during this time and the intent is to continue this in the new structure.

4. OPERATIONS:

4.1 Pamamaroo Inlet Regulator Project update (K Masters/H Parmar)

- WaterNSW continues to progress the Pamamaroo Inlet Regulator Project (PIR), aimed at repairing known problems and restoring full functionality of the asset to improve flow control and water management within the Menindee Lakes system. While early planning and design milestones have been achieved, the project has encountered several challenges that have impacted delivery timelines.
- An overview of project benefits, an explanation of how the project impacts the triggers in the WSPs in the northern catchments and why it is a significant issue was provided.
- Project delays presented and discussed, including physical access (high water levels due to significant rainfall), operational constraints (repairs requiring temporary isolation) and funding shortfall following the IPART determination. WaterNSW is reviewing project scopes and timelines and will prioritise works to ensure critical infrastructure is delivered within available funding.
- WaterNSW remains committed to delivering this project in a safe, efficient, and environmentally responsible manner. We are currently revising the project delivery schedule and will provide further updates as information becomes available.

4.2 Regional Operations update (M Yeaman)

- In response to IPART's interim outcomes for the Rural Valleys determination, WaterNSW has adopted a risk-based prioritisation approach for capital investment, strategically balancing risk mitigation with cost efficiency and operational and commercial risks. Medium to low-risk projects have mostly been deferred (eg compliance and provisions related to crane safety, fleet, plant and equipment).
- The projects prioritised for the Border Rivers were presented and discussed, including examples of some of the projects that have been deferred.

Holdfast Crossing removal (S Fletcher, NSW DCCEEW)

- This project was part of Northern Basin Toolkit, which is a government-funded project made up of 6 measures that aim to improve the health and sustainability of rivers and wetlands in the northern Murray-Darling Basin. There were early discussions and considerations for the Border Rivers for fish passage however these were not progressed from late 2023.
- Members requested information on the costs associated with the removal of Holdfast Crossing and questioned what engagement was done with water users on the removal.
- NSW DCCEEW advised consultation was done with Inverell Shire Council, as the asset owner, who then undertook stakeholder engagement. Members stated that no engagement was done with members of Pindari Water Users' Association, who are the primary users of the crossing, stating people were unaware the removal was happening until it was too late.

Action BR2509.02: NSW DCCEEW to provide costs associated with the removal of Holdfast Crossing to the Border Rivers CAG out of session.

Responsibility: S Fletcher (NSW DCCEEW)

4.3 Water Planning and Delivery update (K Gee)

- WaterNSW presented a review of recent operations in the Border Rivers, including recent rainfall and weather outlook, Glenlyon and Pindari dams 6 and 12 month inflows, water resource monitoring dashboard (drought flood risk index), forecast storage volumes and current storage status, allocation and usage to end August, overview of April 2025 supplementary event and 2025/26 operations.
- Significant inflows arrived at both dams from recent rainfall events.
- General Security A class already received 100% AWD; General Security B class received 8% AWD in the latest announcement, and a further increment is expected in the next assessment.
- Supplementary access was announced due to tributary flow and over 46,300ML has already been extracted, including Direct Irrigation Access.
- Regulated demand is expected to be delayed due to supplementary events. Summer supplementary access is available for Dumaresq River section.
- Members felt the first supplementary event in March may have been announced late. WaterNSW advised there was ample opportunity to take water. The announcement process in the Border Rivers is slightly delayed from other valleys due to the approval requirements from BRC and NSW DCCEEW. The trigger for supplementary events is 10GL over 2 days, which was only just reached.
- A stimulus flow was delivered from Pindari Dam during July.
- The Boomi replenishment flow was delivered during July-August; a combination from stimulus release and tributary flow.
- Pindari Dam Low Level Outlet rectification work has been completed.
- D Towner provided a verbal update on Sunwater operations, including allocations, pricing and metering.

5. CUSTOMER SERVICES:

5.1 Customer Services update (R Cocks/B Arabin/K Moore)

- WaterNSW provided an update on Customer Services, including the third-party consent trial for temporary groundwater trade, water market reform, metering and the Water Market System (WMS).

- Based on customer feedback around the challenges of obtaining consent from impacted third-party landholders for proposed groundwater trades, WaterNSW has trialled an objection-style pathway on behalf of two applicants. These both resulted in objections to the application, which then resulted in a smaller volume being offered or the trade being rejected. WaterNSW is continuing to trial this process, and pending outcomes, may offer this service on a 'fee for service' basis to applicants in future. Applicants will still have the option to get their own approval from impacted landholders. Refer to our [FAQs](#) for more information.
- A number of years ago, NSW DCCEEW undertook a review of the Non-Urban Metering Regulations. One of the key outcomes was that **only works actively taking water** are required to be metered and works not actively taking licensed water ('unintended work') would be exempt from the metering requirements.
- An 'unintended work' refers to a water supply work that is authorised, and under the *Water Management Act 2000* does not take, or is not capable of taking, water from a water source. There are a number of [categories that constitute an unintended work](#).
- WaterNSW has developed a series of communications for customers, including notification via letter or email, with follow up notifications via SMS to ensure they are aware of their options to classify works. To gain the unintended work exemption, water users must [amend the classification of their work approval](#) to categorise it as not taking licensed water, which can be done online via WaterNSW's [Customer Portal](#) (refer to our [how-to-guide](#) to register).
- WaterNSW will attempt to contact landholders multiple times, and if a response is not received, WaterNSW will assume the landholder agrees with the current classification and this will be the basis of compliance on that work approval going forward. The program will run for 18 months, with the first tranche to the top 400 entitlement holders to start this month (September). It will then be rolled out in the north followed by the rest of the state. There won't be a fee to change the classification while the program is being rolled out however there may be a small fee in the future.
- Where a work is active, constructed or takes water from a water source, and you do not have an exemption, you are required to comply with metering or reporting obligations. Customers can view the non-urban metering requirements on our [website](#).
- An overview of features now available in the Customer Portal was provided. Registered customers can amend their contact details, view their existing approvals and licences and track the progress of any applications lodged through the portal. Customers can also apply for a BLR and subdivide, surrender and decommission BLR bores and update work status. In-application support is also available. Members stated it is good to see WaterNSW moving towards more digital platforms.

6. BUSINESS PAPERS:

- Taken as read.

7. GENERAL BUSINESS:

7.1 Update on use of Stimulus Flow account (NSW DCCEEW (CPHR Group) (N Young))

- NSW DCCEEW (CPHR Group) has used the stimulus account this year, briefly triggered at the beginning of April, which was quite early and required permission to release earlier than usual due to the water temperature out of dam to avoid cold shock, prime the river and provide a first stimulus. Released stimulus flow peaking at 1600ML/day in July.
- The stimulus flow is protected as environmental water to the confluence with the Dumaresq, then can be re-regulated. 5000ML was used for the flow, which has been replenished, and the remainder of 8GL in the account is being used to keep the base flow.
- The water that wasn't taken up once it went past the junction has been captured at Boggabilla Weir.

Meeting review and close:

Next meeting: 19 March 2026

Meeting closed: 11.55am

Border Rivers Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 11 September 2025

New 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	
BR2509.02	NSW DCCEEW to provide costs associated with the removal of Holdfast Crossing to the Border Rivers CAG out of session.	S Fletcher (NSW DCCEEW)	

Carried forward actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
	Nil carried forward actions		