

Gwydir Customer Advisory Group

Minutes of Meeting

Location: Social Co House, Balo St, Moree
Date: 17 March 2026
Time: 9.30am

Present: Nick Gillingham (Chair), Jim Cush, Louise Gall, Zeb Chapman, David Preston, Michael Seery, Mark Winter, Hayley White (online), Lila-Jane Fisher.

WaterNSW: Rob O'Neill, Brendan Maher, Chris Shaw, Gavin Inglis, Ken Gee, Michelle Yeaman, Sam Stokes, Phil Glastonbury and Toni Hayes. Online for specific agenda items: Amanda Fuller, Ramona Nica, Geoff Watson.

Meeting Opened: 9.30am

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

1.1 Acknowledgement of Country

1.2 **Apologies:** Joe Robinson, Chrissy Stannard.

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 Gwydir CAG Meeting, 10 September 2025

- Resolved the minutes of the meeting held on [10 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 Gwydir CAG for our team were discussed, including issues from the Gwydir listening tour (January), floodplain harvesting and flood work approvals, trade rules and restrictions, northern basin connectivity program, Menindee trigger restrictions, MDBA review, and metering compliance and back end issues.
- Members commented that one of the biggest issues for customers is the complexity of the rules, with little understanding of why many are in place. Customers acknowledge that WaterNSW is tasked with operationalising the rules, which is difficult. WaterNSW advised we are trying to identify things that could be done better, are there opportunities to change or simplify some things etc.

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.
- Telemetry blackspots discussed. The Minister has granted a [temporary exemption](#) 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 on obtaining an exemption, use the department's [telemetry coverage tool](#).
- Discussion occurred around frustration with the DAS and some sites not showing up in the customer DAS, which has been ongoing without resolution.

Action GWY2603.01: WaterNSW to investigate customer issues with sites not showing in the DAS.

Responsibility: C Shaw

- To create a DAS account, please reach out to customer.helpdesk@waternsw.com.au for assistance in setting up your account.

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.
- All customers in the Gwydir valley will soon receive a letter asking them to ensure the classification of their works is correct. Customers can self-serve in the [Customer Portal](#) and update the status of their work to reflect its installation status on the ground and how it is being used. To understand the different work classifications, please refer to the [classification of work status fact sheet](#).
- 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.
- 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. 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.

- Members asked if there is a long-term solution being developed to address the recent temporary trade issues in the Gwydir, noting the temporary suspension of the amendment to the WSP to end of May. WaterNSW is working with the department on a solution and hopes to have arrangements in place by the next irrigation season. However, there may be an interim period where some trades may be refused.
- 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.
- Members were supportive of discontinuing, as many impacted parties don't feel sufficiently informed to make a decision and believe the determination should be made by the hydrogeologist.
- Further feedback on the proposal to discontinue can be provided via email to engagement@waternsw.com.au.

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. Feedback from the Gwydir listening tour (from GVIA and customers) has already been captured in the Action Plan.
- Members stated having consistent rules, guidelines and interpretation between agencies is very important and that consistency should be applied across the basin.
- Members questioned if the timeframe for compliance of existing flood works in the Murrumbidgee (2029) will apply statewide. WaterNSW advised the compliance date is part of each FMP.
- NRAR is not part of the Strikeforce, however they are being kept informed. WaterNSW intends to inform NRAR of customers who are on the pathway to compliance.
- 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 would like to see valley-specific data in the dashboard and, if possible, a break down into the zones (A, B or C). A timeframe for how long an application has been in place would also be valuable, including the reason for any extended delays.

- WaterNSW advised that one of the biggest changes will be that flood studies will be required to be submitted with the initial application to avoid the backlog of applications. Customers are encouraged to utilise the free pre-application meeting to discuss proposed works prior to submitting an application.
- For more information go to <https://www.waternsw.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 Gwydir, including recent rainfall, actual and statistical inflows, water resource monitoring dashboard overview (currently operating under normal conditions), Copeton Dam forecast storage volume, current storage status, water availability and usage to date and the three-year rolling average supplementary roster.
- The season has been dry, with no real tributary inflows. Most of the water has come from the dam, which is sitting in line with 80th percentile inflows for the past 12 months.
- Water allocation remains relatively high, with 464GL of availability for next season.
- No irrigation water is currently being taken, with some environmental (HEW) orders currently being delivered. Winter maintenance at Copeton Dam and downstream weir structures will occur over winter.
- Next season will be order on demand, with no identified shortfalls at this time.
- The primary contact for the Gwydir valley is Sam Stokes; the Gwydir on-call number is 02 9685 4348.

4.2 Pamamaroo Inlet Regulator update (G Watson)

- 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.
- The temporary coffer dams to enable dewatering during construction may result in potential resource losses of around 1%. The coffer dams can be removed to release 8000ML/day in Pamamaroo, which would address the majority of scenarios. WaterNSW is working with the MDBA to clarify what happens to allocations if the approach during construction doesn't stop the water loss.
- Members highlighted the 1% resource impact relates to downstream losses and emphasised the importance for the MDBA to also consider upstream resource impacts, stating both should be given equal priority.
- 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 in the process of engaging a contractor who will be ready to commence as soon as triggers are met.
- Members emphasised the urgency to complete the project as soon as possible.

4.3 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.

- A summary of larger projects in the Gwydir valley was provided, including the electrical upgrade at Copeton Dam.
- WaterNSW has repaired the flood damaged gauge at Marshall Ponds, the site is back online and WaterInsights is reflective of the current flow conditions. There are still some outstanding minor earthworks required to address roadside drainage/erosion issues which have exposed the orifice conduit to the river however this is not critical in the reporting data of the site.

4.4 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.
- Members were happy with the examples provided and are interested in forecast planning for capital projects, as other factors may influence these (Menindee targets, northern connectivity).

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.
- 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. The data in RTD comes from WaterNSW. Members suggested contacting 2WEB in Bourke and get them to advise listeners that the data comes from WaterNSW's WaterInsights app. Would be a good promotion for the site.

Action GWY2603.02: WaterNSW to investigate with Radio 2WEB regarding reporting of WaterNSW daily river reports.

Responsibility: B Maher

- 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.

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.

Meeting review and close:

Next meeting: 9 September 2026, Moree

Meeting closed: 1.00pm

Gwydir Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 17 March 2026

New actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
GWY2603.01	WaterNSW to investigate customer issues with sites not showing in the DAS.	C Shaw	Complete.
GWY2603.02	WaterNSW to investigate with Radio 2WEB regarding reporting of WaterNSW daily river reports.	B Maher	In progress.

Carried forward actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
GWY2509.01	WaterNSW to provide an update on the Marshall Ponds gauge at the next meeting.	M Yeaman	Complete. See agenda item 4.3.
GWY2509.03	GVIA to canvas customers on preference for wording of supplementary announcements and advise WaterNSW.	L Gall (GVIA)	Customers suggested adding a second line indicating initial allocation, plus additional allocation, and total. WaterNSW is not concerned and advised customers can't pump without a water order anyway and the system won't allow an order over allocation. There are already some checks and balance in place.
GWY2509.04	WaterNSW to liaise with Gwydir Valley Irrigators' Association and members to investigate issues raised around registering for floodplain harvesting events.	C Shaw	In progress. Refer also to agenda item 3.1. Members questioned the progress of iWAS to reflect FPH balances. This is still in progress and WaterNSW acknowledges the importance of getting this finalised. WaterNSW is currently manually accounting for it, with the Water Accounting team entering data into the Water Accounting System to ensure accounts are up to date.