

Gwydir Customer Advisory Group

Minutes of Meeting

Location: Social Co House, Balo St, Moree
Date: 9 September 2026
Time: 9.00am

Present: Nick Gillingham (Chair), Mark Winter, Lou Gall, Mick Seery, Zeb Chapman, Johann Oosthuizen, David Preston, Lila-Jane Fisher and Hayley White (online).

WaterNSW: Rob O'Neill, Jerome Douziech, Brendan Maher, Kate Masters, Ken Gee, Sam Stokes, Vikrant Malik, Michelle Yeaman, Roger Patricks, Gavin Inglis, Chris Bath and Toni Hayes. Online for specific agenda items: Amanda Fuller and Phil Glastonbury.

Meeting Opened: 9.00am

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

1.1 Acknowledgement of Country

1.2 Apologies: Joe Robinson, Jim Cush, Harry Cush, 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, 17 March 2026

- Resolved the minutes of the meeting held on [17 March 2026](#) be confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting. Taken as read.

N Gillingham/M Seery (carried)

1.6 Actions arising from minutes

- Refer to action sheet (attached).

1.7 Election of Chairperson

- Nick Gillingham was nominated by Mick Seery, seconded by Lou Gall. Nil other nominations received. Accepted and carried.

2. WATERNSW UPDATE:

2.1 WaterNSW Executive update (R O'Neill/J Douziech)

- 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. It was also noted that WaterNSW manages a lot of Crown Land.

- Members are supportive of efforts to maximise value from existing land assets to generate additional income, stating it is an extremely positive sign.
- Discussion occurred around renewable energy opportunities, with WaterNSW noting hydro generation currently provides greater commercial value than solar, although solar is used at several sites. This may change over time with technology changes.
- WaterNSW highlighted opportunities to leverage artificial intelligence (AI), emerging technology and data to improve business processes, operational efficiency and customer service, supported by ongoing investment to build workforce capability and digital skills (eg training in use of drones to access remote sites etc). Staff are starting to use AI in daily activities, however it is being adopted cautiously to support decision-making and administrative functions, while maintaining human oversight for operational and critical asset management activities.
- An overview on the Lower Gingham bird bank issue was provided. It was noted that future works or remediation activities would need to align with relevant approvals and Floodplain Management Plan requirements. Affected landholders have been introduced to and encouraged to engage with the relevant government agencies regarding available options and processes. WaterNSW also explained the specific approval process for these works and encouraged customers to book a 1:1 session with a regulation specialist when they are ready to submit an application.

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 was also provided.
- WaterNSW highlighted improved financial sustainability following the organisational transformation program and final IPART determinations. Financial performance has improved substantially, with Rural Valleys 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.
- Gwydir valley forecast revenue is expected to increase through to FY29, driven by government contributions and customer subsidies, which together comprise a large share of total revenue. The latest IPART determination supports cost recovery, affordability and long-term service sustainability.
- ROI is expected to improve and remain positive through to FY29, while the regulated asset base is expected to grow as a result of ongoing investment in infrastructure, asset renewals and dam safety works. Planned capital expenditure includes the Tyreel Weir fishway, Tyreel Regulator fishway and Copeton Dam spillway investigation projects.
- Members queried the forecast increase in revenue to FY29. WaterNSW advised this reflects increased government contributions, affordability subsidies and customer revenue increases over the determination period, resulting in more cost-reflective pricing and revised funding arrangements. Increased government contributions towards fishways and dam safety are also projected to increase.
- Operating costs are expected to remain relatively stable through ongoing efficiency initiatives and transformation savings. WaterNSW noted continued investment in critical infrastructure to maintain reliable service delivery and long-term asset sustainability.
- Members questioned whether ongoing dry conditions could affect revenue forecasts. WaterNSW advised forecasts are based on a 20-year rolling average and may vary depending on future water availability and customer demand.

- Members sought clarification on potential impacts of policy changes, such as water recovery initiatives. WaterNSW advised that entitlement transfers typically change who pays charges rather than tariff rates, with environmental water holders assuming a greater share of charges where entitlement ownership changes.
- Members noted WaterNSW cost recovery is above inflation (capped at 10% per year), stating customer revenue streams are also variable. WaterNSW advised the numbers largely reflect decisions that IPART made for opex and capex allowances on future charges. The increase not only reflects inflation, but investment in asset renewals as well.
- Members questioned if WaterNSW has factored in changes to reliability and access to water if restricted as a result of government policy (floodplain harvesting, connectivity etc). WaterNSW advised that supplementary access is included (if different to the 20-year rolling average) however floodplain harvesting take is not included.
- Members highlighted the challenges of long-term planning amid uncertainty in water availability, policy settings and future pricing determinations. WaterNSW advised that the maximum price we can charge is set by IPART, including the determination timeline.
- WaterNSW provided an update on the organisational transformation, advising that implementation is ongoing, with a focus on identifying service gaps, prioritising work programs and improving productivity while maintaining customer service levels. WaterNSW encouraged customers to provide feedback if they observe any reduction in service levels.

3. OPERATIONS:

3.1 Regional Operations (M Yeaman)

- WaterNSW provided an overview of the Gwydir Capital Works Program for FY27-FY29, including project funding arrangements, project prioritisation and delivery status. Priority works are focused on asset renewals, dam safety and environmental projects, with a number of lower-priority projects deferred.
- Key priority projects include electrical renewals, control system upgrades, valve refurbishment and dam safety works at Copeton Dam, together with the Tyreel Weir Fishway and Tyreel Regulator Fishway projects, which are currently in the initiation phase.
- WaterNSW noted that a range of factors influence project cost estimates, including project scope, site conditions and delivery requirements, in addition to design considerations.
- Members sought an update on the timing of the Tyreel fishway projects. WaterNSW advised the projects remain in the initiation phase and consultant engagement has not yet commenced. A further update, including indicative delivery timeframes, can be provided at the next meeting.

Action GWY2609.01: WaterNSW to provide an update on the Tyreel fishway projects, including indicative delivery timeframes, at the next meeting.

Responsibility: M Yeaman

- WaterNSW provided an overview on gauging and water monitoring activities, including site visitation frequencies, gauging priorities, catchment monitoring performance and WaterNSW's review process for determining fit-for-purpose monitoring programs. An outline of tools and systems used to assess site criticality, stakeholder requirements and monitoring priorities was also presented.
- Members queried whether WaterNSW is achieving minimum monitoring frequencies for gauging stations. WaterNSW advised the target is 6 site visits per year, however frequency varies depending on water availability, site access, operational priorities and resourcing. The current Gwydir average is approximately 4.6 gaugings per site per year.
- Gauging priorities are determined using a risk-based approach that considers stakeholder requirements, water delivery needs, flood monitoring, site criticality, flow conditions and accessibility. Environmental releases and changing site conditions may also influence monitoring frequency.
- Members sought clarification on the reliability and accuracy of gauging data. WaterNSW advised a confidence range of $\pm 10\%$ is generally targeted, noting accuracy can vary depending on site characteristics, flow conditions and the availability of controlling structures. Current dry conditions

can make accurate gauging more challenging, although increased use of remote monitoring technology has improved confidence 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 the project commencement timeframe, noting their understanding that works were scheduled to begin in July 2026. WaterNSW advised that a number of projects were paused pending the final IPART determination. Members highlighted concerns that project delays may have implications for reliability and water availability in the northern system and emphasised the importance of progressing the project as a priority.

3.3 Water Planning and Delivery (K Gee)

- WaterNSW presented a review of operations in the Gwydir Valley, including rainfall and climatic conditions, inflows, storage levels, Copeton Dam storage forecasts, overview of the water resource monitoring dashboard, and allocation and usage.
- Recent rainfall across the Gwydir Valley has generally been well below average over the past three months. The Bureau of Meteorology outlook indicates neutral rainfall conditions are expected across northern NSW during the next three months. Temperatures are expected to be high therefore high delivery losses are expected over the season.
- Copeton Dam inflows over the past 24 months were in line with median historical conditions, while six-month inflows were below minimum levels (1.7GL).
- The Gwydir Water Resource Monitoring Dashboard, including rainfall, inflow, storage indicators and Copeton Dam storage forecasts was presented, with the Gwydir valley currently in 'dry conditions'. WaterNSW expects this to deteriorate over the coming months with no rainfall. The Copeton Dam forecast storage volume doesn't assume any future AWDs.
- Water allocations remain available across all licence categories for 2026-27, with relatively low levels of usage recorded to date. Members asked if WaterNSW if the usage data can be separated into extractive and non-extractive users in future presentations. WaterNSW advised that 126.6GL is environmental water (not including EWA). This data is available on [WaterInsights](#).
- WaterNSW provides advanced notice of environmental deliveries as best as possible however notification timeframes can vary depending on timing and operational requirements of individual events.
- The [three-year rolling average supplementary water roster](#) was presented. No supplementary access has occurred in 2026-27 to date, with all reaches currently 0% use for the year.
- Members queried if there are any large environmental orders planned for the Gwydir. The NSW environmental water holder advised there is potential for deliveries to both the Gingham and Lower Gwydir over summer, and maybe some in the Mehi, depending on downstream conditions. Members requested notification to WaterNSW as soon as possible to avoid likely channel capacity issues.
- Gwydir Valley 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.
- Members welcomed the formal inclusion of historical works in the action plan and noted that regulatory changes will be required to achieve the intended outcomes.
- The Strikeforce is planning to hold an online meeting with key stakeholders across the state to discuss issues and next steps.

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 raised concerns that customers with multiple meters in the same vicinity may have difficulty accurately identifying individual meters, potentially resulting in the declassification of incorrect works.
- Members stated Georgina Tuaoimalii has been a great help to customers throughout this process.

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 (R O'Neill)

- 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.
- Members asked whether this issue was influencing environmental watering decisions. Environmental water holders advised that it is a consideration, but not a significant driver of decision-making. A cautious approach is being taken to avoid triggering large bird breeding events.

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.

Meeting review and close:

Next meeting: date TBC, Moree

Meeting closed: 12.15pm

Gwydir Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 9 September 2026

New actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
GWY2609.01	WaterNSW to provide an update on the Tyreel fishway projects, including indicative delivery timeframes, at the next meeting.	M Yeaman	

Carried forward actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
	Nil carried forward actions.		