

Gwydir Customer Advisory Group

Minutes of Meeting

Location: Social Co House, Balo St, Moree
Date: 10 September 2025
Time: 9.00am

Present: Jim Cush, Louise Gall, Zeb Chapman, David Preston, Michael Seery, Mark Winter, Hayley White (online), Chrissy Stannard (observer) and Dan Boland (observer). Lila-Jane Fisher (from 10am).

WaterNSW: Brendan Maher, Kate Masters, Ken Gee, Michelle Yeaman, Chris Bath, Kyra Beesley, Tom Riley (online), Sonia Townsend (online) and Toni Hayes. Online for specific agenda items: Andrew George, Sam Stokes, Duncan Wallace, Hetal Parmar, Russell Cocks, Ben Arabin, Martin Brooks, Lachlan Browne, Kim Garside.

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 Gwydir CAG Meeting, 18 March 2025

- Resolved the minutes of the meeting held on [18 March 2025](#) be confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting. Taken as read.

Z Chapman / J Cush (carried)

1.6 Actions arising from minutes

- Refer to action sheet (attached).

2. INTRODUCTION TO CAGs:

2.1 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.
- 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.
- Members thanked WaterNSW staff for always being available to answer questions and help customers.
- Members stated August/September is a key time of the year for water delivery discussions and essential to have one of the in-person meetings at this time. WaterNSW will work with customers when scheduling meetings.

2.2 Election of Chairperson

- Nick Gillingham was nominated by Jim Cush, seconded by Louise Gall. Nil other nominations received. To be confirmed as not in attendance.

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. 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 raised concerns that a restructure could risk resolution of a number of issues requiring significant improvement, such as database investment (challenges with work approvals, issues linking the DAS and iWAS), stating these are core functions that should be enhanced to deliver better outcomes for customers (refer also agenda item 5.1).
- WaterNSW explained our smaller and shrinking customer base is due to a shift in where entitlement sits and different patterns of water use behaviour, particularly in the south, driven by Commonwealth water buy backs. This translates to lower water sales and fewer individual customers to spread costs over. WaterNSW highlighted this in its [submission to IPART](#).
- WaterNSW is a fixed cost business and regardless of flood or drought the cost to run the business is the same. If the volume of water usage in any given year is below the 20Y average, which is what IPART base their pricing decision on, WaterNSW is under revenue and must absorb the costs. Added to this are the additional regulatory obligations and non-commercial activities placed on WaterNSW through the new Operating Licence, which are unfunded and push additional cost onto customers. Departmental policy changes (eg metering) have also impacted WaterNSW as additional resources were needed to meet our requirements.
- Discussion occurred around government obligations to deliver and pay for infrastructure (eg fishways), stating the current model is flawed, and the need for a regulatory review on how WaterNSW should operate (including the WAMC model).
- Members raised concerns that the key systems used by irrigators on a day to day basis will be affected (iWAS, WaterInsights, DQP portal etc). WaterNSW advised the business is in care and maintenance mode, meaning we are pressing pause and staying where we are today for the next 12 months. Things won't go backwards but may not go forward in that time.
- As WaterNSW goes through these changes we are keen to hear from customers if they notice a decline in our customer service in any way.
- Customers will have more opportunities to engage with IPART and the NSW Government on the reforms and customers are encouraged to participate in the process so we can find a more sustainable way going forward.

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 and will provide further updates as information becomes available.
- 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 top 10 projects prioritised for the Gwydir valley were presented and discussed, as well as examples of some of the projects that have been deferred. Depending on how far down the line a project has progressed is a deciding factor as to whether we continue or pause.
- Members requested discussion on identifying priority sites for future gauges, commenting the gauge on the Lower Carole/Gil Gil is in the wrong location and an additional gauge would give better clarity and understanding of flow.
- WaterNSW advised there is no funding for new gauges but will assess the condition of the current gauge and could potentially use renewals funding to install one in a new location (would require having to retire the current gauge due to funding constraints). Discussed.
- The Marshall Ponds gauge has suffered flood damage due to the site being located on the roadside near the bridge. During floods water ran down the table drain and scoured the path of the orifice. The orifice became exposed and unstable, as well as all the soil being dumped in the gauge pool, so levels are unreliable and often impacted by silt. Potentially a full relocation is needed to create a sustainable fix but there is limited space on the road reserve in the immediate vicinity. WaterNSW will continue to investigate options and update CAG members.

Action GWY2509.01: WaterNSW to provide an update on the Marshall Ponds gauge at the next meeting.

Responsibility: M Yeaman

- Members stated the reading is showing a history of ML that were never there and asked if a red line could be put through the reading on the daily river report to show it is false. WaterNSW advised it is currently tagged red on WaterInsights.
- An overview of recent projects undertaken in the Gwydir valley was presented and discussed.

4.3 Water Planning and Delivery update (K Gee)

- WaterNSW presented a review of recent operations in the Gwydir valley, including rainfall and weather outlook, actual and statistical inflows, water resource monitoring dashboard (drought flood risk index to end of July), current storage status, 2025-26 water availability and usage, 2025-26 operations and an update on the 3 year rolling average supplementary roster.
- The upcoming season will be order on demand, with a late start to the season expected for most (Dec/Jan). There may be some earlier take for account management purposes.

- The 3-year rolling average supplementary roster (3T) was discussed. The lowest this year is 30% (bottom of the Moomin, Alma to past Iffley). The lowest 3-year total is 115% in the Mehi (Combadello–Gundare), Moomin Creek (Clarendon to Alma) and Carole Creek Offtake to Garah. WaterNSW will look to include the roster on WaterInsights.

Action GWY2509.02: WaterNSW to look into including the Gwydir 3T supplementary roster on WaterInsights (complete).

Responsibility: K Gee

- Supplementary announcements discussed and contrast to the Border Rivers, where total volume is announced (vs total announcement (additional x%) in the Gwydir). This has been trialled in the Gwydir in the past with mixed feedback and different interpretation. The Gwydir operates differently due to the way some works are linked across different streams (the equity sharing factor prevents people from doubling their allocation, where iWAS does not).

Action GWY2509.03: GVIA to canvas customers on preference for wording of supplementary announcements and advise WaterNSW.

Responsibility: L Gall (GVIA)

- Members stated there have been fundamental flaws in the process of making supplementary announcements and urged WaterNSW to review the process to ensure it does not happen again. WaterNSW is aware of the issue and will continue to address.
- The Water Planning and Delivery on-call number for the Gwydir valleys is 02 9685 4348, with Sam Stokes the primary contact.

4.4 Operational Communications (T Riley)

- WaterNSW sought member feedback on the recently implemented Gwydir Valley monthly operational snapshot (per business papers), which was sent to 168 users in the valley.
- The snapshot is aimed at passive users who want an overview/snapshot of the valley rather than water users who actively use WaterInsights.
- Feedback received was positive, with members suggesting the date the information is recorded should be clearly marked so there is no misinterpretation.

5. CUSTOMER SERVICES:

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

- 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.
- 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 flagged issues with registering the start of take for a floodplain harvesting event, with the system timing out and customers locked out for a period before they can access again. WaterNSW advised this is a security measure however will continue to investigate.

Action GWY2509.04: WaterNSW to liaise with Gwydir Valley Irrigators' Association and members to investigate issues raised around registering for floodplain harvesting events.

Responsibility: C Shaw

- Members questioned when floodplain harvesting account volumes will be updated in iWAS. WaterNSW acknowledged this is a source of frustration for customers and this is one of the priorities we are working through and hope to have addressed by the end of the year. The water accounting team has reached out to all customers that have taken FPH water (if you haven't received a call, please reach out).
- Inaccuracies with works approvals was raised. If customers have sites they believe should not be in the portal and causing issues, please reach out to WaterNSW and we will look at them on a case-by-case basis.
- Some members have experienced delays in application invoices and feel there has been a lack of communication. WaterNSW advised every affected customer in the Gwydir valley has been contacted, however if this is not the case please contact us to look into it.
- There is still a backlog on DQPs making progress on necessary paperwork to enable certification of FPH works to increase, potentially due to capacity constraints, with not many DQPs doing FPH work. If customers believe they are 100% compliant but have received a letter, please contact WaterNSW to investigate.

6. BUSINESS PAPERS:

- Taken as read.

7. GENERAL BUSINESS:

- Nil general business raised.

Meeting review and close:

Next meeting: 18 March 2026, Moree

Meeting closed: 12.20pm

Gwydir Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 10 September 2025

New 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	To be provided at next meeting.
GWY2509.02	WaterNSW to look into including the Gwydir 3T supplementary roster on WaterInsights.	K Gee	Complete.
GWY2509.03	GVIA to canvas customers on preference for wording of supplementary announcements and advise WaterNSW.	L Gall (GVIA)	In progress.
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.

Carried forward actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
GWY2503.03	NSW DCCEEW to confirm compliance expectation for FPH take when meter value is recorded in different timeframes to take (smaller increments).	D Connor (NSW DCCEEW)	