

Lachlan Customer Advisory Group

Minutes of Meeting

Location: Agriculture and Research Centre, Fifield Rd, Condobolin

Date: 24 March 2026

Time: 9.00am

Present: Gordon Turner (Chair), Tom Green, Glenn Daley, Michael Payten, Damian Byrne, Paul Doyle, Danika McDonald, Madeline Clark, Michael Storrer, Joanne Lenehan (online), Andrea Wilson (online).

WaterNSW: Rob O'Neill, Brendan Maher, Ashley Webb, Jonathan Belej, Shaun Gleeson, Warwick Hansen, Ben Coffey, Geoff Watson, Kristen Gemmell and Toni Hayes. Online for specific agenda items: Amanda Fuller, Phil Glastonbury, Daniel Kemp, Rod Nicklen.

External agency staff: Shahadat Chowdhury and Fabienne d'Hautefeuille (online)(NSW DCCEEW).

Meeting Opened: 9.00am

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

1.1 Acknowledgement of Country

1.2 Apologies: Charlie Harris, Narelle Hall, Jock Coupland, Phil Greenhill, Sam Fensom,

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 Lachlan CAG Meeting, 23 September 2025

– Resolved the minutes of the meeting held on [23 September 2025](#) be confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting. Taken as read.

T Green/G Daley (carried)

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 Lachlan CAG for our team were discussed, including flood works and Lachlan FMP, processes for approving groundwater trades/third party consent, Lake Cargelligo Embankment Project timeline, Lake Cargelligo inlet regulator works, storage levels and seasonal outlook.

– Members noted trade processing times have increased following the rationalisation, which is causing issues (refer also agenda item 3.2).

– Members commented that WaterNSW now undertakes a broader range of regulatory functions than in the past, presumably funded by water users. WaterNSW advised there is a higher user share

component, determined by IPART, and activities have expanded to include things such as water quality, fish passage etc.

- Members asked whether the current organisational structure will be impacted by a new determination from IPART. IPART is expected to release its draft determination by the end of March, after which more will be known (including the duration of the determination and associated funding). Any decisions will be dependent on the outcome however the current structure is not likely to change.
- Customers are encouraged to contact WaterNSW if there is a noticeable decline in service levels.
- Members stated there has not been a lot of positive feedback for the DQP concierge system. Concerns were raised that corporate knowledge has been lost and that some processes are more complex than necessary, stating simple transactional activities should be automated and streamlined (eg changing water orders within lead time).
- WaterNSW advised it is looking into the process for changing water orders within lead time and it is a work in progress.

3. Customer Services:

3.1 Water Accounting & Metering (A Duffy)

- 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.
- Members queried if it is standard practice to confirm telemetry reads in iWAS. WaterNSW advised telemetry is automatically confirmed in the system on the 1st and 15th of each month, however if customers want reads in between this time they can manually enter into iWAS and confirm. Entering the meter read in iWAS will reconcile water orders.
- Members suggested changing the format of the data so that non-telemetered data is clearly distinguished from telemetered data (eg by adding an asterisk or displaying the information in red rather than green). Taken on notice.
- 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.

3.2 Groundwater update (F d'Hautefeuille, NSW DCCEEW)

- NSW DCCEEW provided a verbal update on the technical assessment used to support groundwater trades and bore approvals. Trades are referred to NSW DCCEEW by WaterNSW through a triage process.
- The standard turnaround time for permanent trades is typically 45 business days; however, due to an influx of applications and a reduced number of staff who can do the work, current processing times have extended to approximately six months. The Minister's office has been advised of these delays.
- BLR and temporary trades are being processed more quickly, with current turnaround times averaging around two weeks.
- Work is now underway on applications submitted in October 2025. Customers seeking updates on the status of their applications should contact WaterNSW directly.
- Members expressed concerns around the increased time taken to process trades, stating approvals are taking longer than expected, with bore extraction limits (BEL) placed on them and no information provided to customers. There appears to be no consistency and no communication between WaterNSW and NSW DCCEEW. Members also questioned what has changed over the past 18 months as more

applications are being denied, noting that some trades approved in previous years have been refused this year.

- NSW DCCEEW advised that trade criteria have not changed, and applications are assessed case by case, considering account details and other local factors. In some areas, repeated annual temporary trades raise questions about whether they should be treated as permanent, which requires further assessment.
- Members also noted that reasons for declined trades are not always being clearly communicated to applicants. If a trade is rejected customers should contact WaterNSW.
- Customers were encouraged to provide details of trades they have concerns about and WaterNSW will investigate.

3.2 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.
- 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 questioned how many applications have been rejected through third party consent. Taken on notice.

Action LAC2603.01: WaterNSW to provide data on the number of applications refused through third party consent.

Responsibility: A Fuller

- Discussion occurred around options for solutions to avoid conflict between neighbours if an application is rejected/consent not given. WaterNSW is keen to hear suggestions from customers on ways to improve the process.
- Further feedback on the proposal to discontinue can be provided via email to engagement@waternsw.com.au.
- Customers can [subscribe to water trade and market email updates](#) via our website.

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 DCCEEW) 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 DCCEEW 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 DCCEEW, 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 suggested the dashboard separate existing (historical) works and new works.
- Members advised they had been told by the department that if landholders can prove works were existing pre-July 2000 the application process would be straightforward, however this doesn't appear to be the case in the Murrumbidgee. Members expressed concern that the volume of pre-existing works in the Lachlan will be significant, and likely similar in other valleys.
- WaterNSW advised applications are assessed against the rules of the WSP as they are currently written and suggested members raise this issue directly with the department in the afternoon session.
- Discussion occurred around dual purpose works. This is an active issue that hasn't been fully resolved however is being discussed as part of the Strikeforce. The agencies are close to alignment and making a position publicly known.
- For more information go to <https://www.waternsw.com.au/customer-services/water-licensing/flood-work-approvals>

4. OPERATIONS:

4.1 Water Planning & Delivery (W Hansen)

- WaterNSW presented a review of operations in the Lachlan, including storages update, weather outlook, dam operations, an overview of the water resource monitoring dashboard, water availability and usage, water account balances, comparison of inflow scenarios and storage forecast.
- The impacts of the January heatwave at Carcoar was discussed, noting WaterNSW's response was reactive rather than proactive. WaterNSW advised that the losses were extreme unprecedented. WaterNSW responded as quickly as possible and released a pulse to refill holes as fast as possible.
- Members suggested customers be notified via WaterInsights when end-of-system flows at Belubula are turned off. Members suggested operational updates for the Belubula also be included on the Lachlan WaterInsights page. Taken on notice.

Action LAC2603.02: WaterNSW to consider including Belubula operational updates on the Lachlan WaterInsights page.

Responsibility: J Belej

- An overview of order vs take was provided. The loss has improved by more than half compared to the last CAG meeting and it is well below the surplus target.
- The 2025/26 irrigation season has almost come to a close, with total valley orders currently below 500ML/day. WaterNSW is holding weekly meetings across the season with Lower Lachlan customers to manage supply and demand.
- Environmental watering has started at Booligal, with the Merrowie Creek event flowing on from the end of that.
- A translucent delivery was triggered on 14 September and ran for 3 days, releasing 14.5GL.

- Lake Cargelligo has a maximum capacity of 70% due to the embankment works. There are also limitations on the operation of the inlet due to structural issues. The lake levels are being managed, while still being an available resource for downstream supply.
- There will be some limitations to the inflow into Lake Brewster during the upcoming works on the Ballyrogan Bridge, though should not have a significant impact on day-to-day operations.

4.2 Water Allocation update (S Chowdhury, NSW DCCEEW)

- An overview of the surplus water calculation and allocation method was provided as well as current allocations, inflow outlook and continuous improvement initiatives. The current allocation is the lowest since 2019.
- NSW DCCEEW is continually refining allocation statements and any feedback from customers is welcomed.

Lachlan Evaporation Reduction

- An update on clause 45 (other accounting rules) of the Lachlan Regulated River Water Source Water Sharing Plan (WSP) was provided.
- To discourage inactive holdings, evaporation reductions apply to water allocations carried over under clause 41(3) based on net evaporation on the extra surface area generated by the carried over water.
- Some implementation issues have been experienced as, unlike Macquarie regulated accounting, no carryover sub-account exists in the Lachlan. Water is being moved to high security accounts and sub-accounts to avoid carryover reduction. Trade is also utilised to avoid carryover reduction.
- Suggested improvements presented and discussed, including carryover reduction liability remaining of the licensee (ie trade out will not transfer liability); carryover water to be used first; quarterly reduction is tracked in volume, not %; evaporation cannot be less than zero, avoiding unintended gain.
- The improvements are a discussion starter to see what can be done within the plan limit and within the remit of what the system can handle, while maintaining the principle.
- Members stated the rule, as rewritten, was never the original intent. The intent was to deduct every quarter, not a quarterly determination and a deduction at the end of the water year. Due to the changes irrigators are not deterred to hold water and equity issues arise. Not being calculated until 31 July, and then backdated to 30 June, allows water to be moved during that time.
- WaterNSW and NSW DCCEEW are looking to close trade early to 20 June to stabilise movement. Another option is to close trade on 1 June. This is the first time the problem has been encountered so a solution is still being looked at.

4.3 Regional Operations (B Coffey)

- WaterNSW provided an update on the preventative maintenance plan, completed work orders, current issues, outage plan and the water monitoring program.
- Repairs to the mid-level crest at Coocumber Weir have been delayed due to water levels. Members stated no one seems to be taking ownership for desilting, with the damage impacting the weir and changing the course of the river. WaterNSW will speak to the department to see if this can be progressed.

4.4 Finance proposal for next CAG (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).
- Members would like greater visibility on how much is allocated to assets each year versus how much is being spent, more detail on the spend (top items) and what is driving losses.

- 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.

4.5 Lachlan Valley Project update (G Watson)

Lake Cargelligo Embankment Upgrade

- An overview of progress on the project since the last CAG meeting was provided.
- It is estimated completion of work on Embankments B and C will be mid-late June (represents a program slippage of 4 months) and forecast to complete on budget. Weather has contributed to the delays. All approvals are complete.
- Alternate access to Embankment A has been secured, pending update to the AHIP boundary. Negotiations are continuing with the neighbouring landowner to secure additional land required for the construction footprint. A permanent access agreement is being negotiated with Crown Lands. Construction scheduled to commence on Embankment A in August 2026, with project completion December 2026/January 2027.

Lake Brewster Flood Remediation

- The remediation work is 90% complete with planned completion 1 April, with the exception of embankments K and L (under review, planned start June).
- All costs are fully recovered by insurance.

Action LAC2603.03: WaterNSW to provide diagram/map of where the remedial works are occurring at Lake Brewster.

Responsibility: D Kemp

Ballyrogan Bridge replacement

- Work will be commencing late-March, with scope of works including removal of vegetation, construction of permanent and temporary road approaches, installation of two coffer dams at each end of the bridge, removal of existing bridge, lifting new bridge in place and installation of guardrails and line marking.
- Water flow will be impacted to 35% (inlet) capacity for 4-6 weeks while the coffer dams are in place (mid-2026).
- The temporary bridge will carry the same load, however there will be a speed reduction.

5. Presentations/Consultation:

5.1 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, including availability of rain data. 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.
- 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.

- Members congratulated WaterNSW on the WaterInsights portal, stating it is an incredible resource for customers.
- 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: 22 September 2026, Condobolin

Meeting closed: 1.15pm

Lachlan Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 24 March 2026

New actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
LAC2603.01	WaterNSW to provide data on the number of applications refused through third party consent.	A Fuller	Complete , emailed to members 1/4/26 1247 GW trades received in total, from which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 377 referrals to DCCEEW for impact assessment (no BEL and more than 50% shares capped at 1000ML), from which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 27 third party consent offered as a result of impact assessment, from which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 third party consent not obtained, no reduced volume possible due to impact • 12 third party consent not obtained or partially obtained (according to the number of neighbours and their impact range), reduced volume offered subject to each impact assessment • 7 third party all consents obtained, full volume granted, 3 of them had 0 share WALs
LAC2603.02	WaterNSW to consider including Belubula operational updates on the Lachlan WaterInsights page.	J Belej	
LAC2603.03	WaterNSW to provide diagram/map of where the remedial works are occurring at Lake Brewster.	D Kemp	Complete , emailed to members 13/4/26

Carried forward actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
LAC2509.03	CAG members to send examples of water accounting issues to WaterNSW (Lachlan.Browne@waternsw.com.au) for further investigation.	T Green/M Storrer/W Back	Complete.
LAC2509.04	WaterNSW to explore feasibility of adding a DAS login button to iWAS.	B Maher	Complete. A login button has been added.