

Macquarie-Cudgegong Customer Advisory Group

Minutes of Meeting

Location: Dubbo RSL Club, Brisbane St, Dubbo
Date: 25 March 2026
Time: 9.00am

Present: Tim Gainsford (Chair), Françoise Pieltain, Gus O'Brien, Stewart Denston, David Ramsay, Michael Sutherland, Richard Wass, David Walker, Tim Hosking, Patrick McCutcheon, Michael Drum.

WaterNSW: Rob O'Neill, Brendan Maher, Ashley Webb, Martin Prendergast, Damien Ashlin, Nathan Adams, Chris Shaw, Alicia Cale, Michelle Yeaman, Kristen Gemmell and Toni Hayes. Online for specific agenda items: Amanda Fuller, Tracey Lawson, Phil Glastonbury.

Meeting Opened: 9.00am

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

1.1 Acknowledgement of Country

1.2 Apologies: Matt Seccombe, Tom Quigley, Zarni Bear, Peter Schuster, Frank McKillop, Sam Maroulis, Michelle Coll, Clare Cam.

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 Macquarie-Cudgegong CAG Meeting, 24 September 2025

– Resolved the minutes of the meeting held on [24 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. Customer Services:

2.1 Water Accounting & Metering (A Cale)

– 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.

– Discussion occurred around the volume of alarms that come from the DAS daily, with many customers ignoring them as some self-rectify. This can occur when coverage drops out and will rectify when it's back online. A [telemetry coverage tool](#) has been developed to help customers identify if they are in a blackspot area and therefore potentially eligible for exemption.

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

2.2 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.
- 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.
- Discussion occurred around applications awaiting approval from Crown Lands occupancy and WaterNSW flood works and eligibility for FPH. WaterNSW advised FPH water can only be accessed by a licensed water supply work approval equipped with primary and secondary measurement equipment. This is a mandatory requirement as the deadline to be compliant for FPH measurement has passed.
- Affected landholders should have received correspondence from the department identifying works that could not be included in the FPH water supply work approval and encouraged them to act.
- For Crown Land occupancy, approval holders must apply to Crown Lands for a permissive occupancy licence. For flood works, approval holders should contact the WaterNSW licensing team to amend existing approvals to include the identified works.
- Delays in Crown Lands approvals were noted as a significant challenge and customers were advised to keep evidence of their application and any correspondence to show their commitment in trying to resolve the matter.
- Customers can also [book an appointment](#) with WaterNSW to discuss water licensing and flood work enquiries. Phone appointments are available Monday-Thursday, and face-to-face appointments are available every Tuesday.
- Members thanked WaterNSW, stating it is a refreshing, common sense practical approach to help customers with their FPH licensing and flood work approvals.
- Members suggested late May/June would be a good time of year for valley engagement. Further information will be provided once dates are confirmed.

2.3 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 commented that trades are often done at the end of the month, after the AWD has been done.
- 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.
- There was general feedback amongst members that there is no desire to continue the third party consent process. 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 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. Members stated there are currently multiple things up for consultation before 1 May and WaterNSW is unlikely to get adequate feedback on the 37 recommendations in the Plan by the end of April. Members suggested extending the deadline.
- 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.
- More information is available at <https://www.waturnsw.com.au/customer-services/water-licensing/flood-work-approvals>

3. OPERATIONS:

3.1 Water Planning & Delivery (M Khan)

- WaterNSW presented a review of operations in the Macquarie and Cudgegong valleys, including recent rainfall, weather outlook, dam operations, tributary flows, stock and domestic replenishment, storage status, water usage, inflow scenarios, water resource monitoring dashboard, storage depletion, bulk water transfer scenarios, operations plan, overview of transmission and delivery losses, operational losses vs water order rejections and water quality.
- Based on current conditions, below average inflows and very dry conditions are forecast for the valley, with warmer than average temperatures expected over the next 3-months.
- With Burrendong Dam sitting around 30%, water will need to be called on from Windamere Dam to meet irrigation needs and bulk water transfer (BWT) likely required. Under a 24-month minimum inflow scenario (July 2026–June 2028), a BWT would be required in November 2026 and would be done in 2 phases, again in November 2027.
- Under a drought of record (July 2017–June 2019) scenario, with only drought of record inflows, a BWT still won't be required until November 2026, however, will be done in one phase over 10-12 months.

- Members questioned if there is agreement from all stakeholders to progress when triggers are met. WaterNSW advised we still need to communicate with Mudgee. There are still inflows coming into Burrendong Dam and more will be known by the end of the water year. There will still be 4-5 months before a BWT would be required. Members felt this timeframe was too tight for appropriate community consultation and urged WaterNSW to start discussions earlier.
- WaterNSW highlighted that no agreement from stakeholders is required as the Plan says it must be done, however we would consult and ensure stakeholders are aware of what happens.
- Members suggested establishing a sub-committee or BWT working group that includes irrigators, the environment, industry, councils etc to ensure communication is wide and everyone is across the scenarios, stating the last BWT was 7 years ago and a lot has changed. WaterNSW has a stakeholder engagement plan ready to go when we need to begin engaging stakeholders.

Action MC2603.01: WaterNSW to discuss and organise a working group in the Macquarie and Cudgegong valleys to discuss the bulk water transfer (BWT).

Responsibility: M Khan/B Maher

- Members stated that a benefit of wider stakeholder collaboration is working together to maximise efficiencies in the resource during a dry period.
- WaterNSW has previously run online drought workshops in each valley, and we can hold online CAG meetings when required in times of drought. The CAG is the forum for these operational discussions, and it is up to members to best utilise the forum and bring additional customers in as required.
- WaterNSW is planning for the worst case scenario and assumes the drought is starting now. Even under 'scorched earth' conditions, the BWT doesn't need to commence until November. By leaving the BWT until as late as possible gives the dam as long as possible to receive inflows to allow the BWT to be pushed out further. There is a risk the dam will fill and spill if the BWT is brought forward and WaterNSW is monitoring conditions daily.
- Capacity for transfer through the Cudgegong River was discussed. Maximum capacity is around 700ML/day due to the obstruction of Rocky Waterhole bridge. Without obstruction it would be maximum 900ML/day.
- WaterNSW advised if all carryover is going to be used, the BWT may need to start earlier due to the constraints in the system, however what is likely to be used is unknown. Members stated customers would most likely use all water based on the forecast conditions. WaterNSW will enter this information into the model and see what the results are.
- Operations for the next 3 months will be releases from the dam to meet downstream demand. Minimal environmental or irrigation demand is expected.
- A translucent period will run from 15 March to 30 November, and delivery of stock and domestic replenishment is underway.
- There is ongoing active management of environmental water in the Lower Macquarie and supplementary access will be provided when triggers are met.
- Operational updates can be found on the [WaterInsights portal](#).

3.2 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 projects in the Macquarie and Cudgegong valleys was provided, including valve refurbishment at Burrendong Dam and valves overhaul at Windamere Dam, desilting at Marebone Weir, Marra Creek Channel vegetation control and Warren Weir workshop and office replacement
- Bulgeraga Channel realignment is on hold pending assessment of cost and benefit.

- North Macquarie Marsh Bypass Channel options are being investigated.
- Members asked whether grant funding is available for assets not covered by IPART, such as the Rocky Waterhole bridge (discussed at agenda item 3.1). WaterNSW advised that bridges on public roads are not something we would pursue ownership of but would typically fall under local council. NSW Minerals Council advised they occasionally build bridges on public roads, at their own risk, for business continuity and hand over to the local council. Members stated upgrading the bridge would make the system more efficient.
- An Operations & Maintenance Plan Audit was carried out at Burrendong and Windamere dams by Dam Safety NSW. Excellent feedback was received from the Auditors with no non-conformance identified.

3.3 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 stated the information was adequate, but any more detail would be too much.
- 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 asked whether IPART's draft determination would provide a clear path for the next 2–3 years to support business sustainability. WaterNSW advised that IPART will only focus on pricing, however there is unlikely to be macro-reform before March next year. Once IPART releases its determination (expected end March) WaterNSW will have more certainty on funding going forward.
- Members expressed concern about WaterNSW's long-term sustainability, particularly in a drought scenario, noting water users can't continue to absorb additional costs to support WaterNSW. Increasing fees to keep the business viable is not sustainable for industry. WaterNSW advised that the government will be looking at government/user share, stating the State-Owned Corporation (SOC) model assumes WaterNSW operates as a financially sustainable business.

4. WaterNSW update:

4.1 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 Macquarie-Cudgegong CAG for our team were discussed, including floodplain harvesting, bulk water transfer (BWT), storage levels and seasonal outlook, Macquarie Marshes flood recovery works update, water accounting and metering roll out.
- Members sought assurance that applications or assessments that have been submitted will continue to progress with the reduction of staff. WaterNSW advised there are QA procedures for all applications and any that have been submitted have been passed on to other staff to complete. If there is something that has been missed, please let us know asap.

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. 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.

6. BUSINESS PAPERS (taken as read):

- Taken as read.

7. GENERAL BUSINESS:

7.1 Wambuul Macquarie and Cudgegong Rivers Environmental Water Operations (T Hosking, NSW DCCEEW, CPHR Group)

- An overview of recent Wambuul-Macquarie and Cudgegong Rivers environmental flows was provided, including a review of the Macquarie Marshes inundation and environmental responses.
- The CPHR group works hand in glove with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH).
- A total of 28,166ha was inundated in the Macquarie Marshes which was above target and all areas of the Marshes were well serviced. The Marshes are now set up to deal with a drought if it occurs.
- The flows resulted in good connectivity to the Barwon, fish and waterbird outcomes and wetland vegetation in the Wambuul-Macquarie system.
- Discussion occurred around Rocky Waterhole Road bridge, noting it requires a fishway.

7.2 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: 23 September 2026, Dubbo

Meeting closed: 12.45pm

Macquarie-Cudgegong Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 25 March 2026

New actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
MC2603.01	WaterNSW to discuss and organise a working group in the Macquarie and Cudgegong valleys to discuss the bulk water transfer (BWT).	M Khan/B Maher	In progress.

Carried forward actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
MC2503.02	WaterNSW to liaise with Cudgegong customers regarding the Bulk Water Transfer.	M Khan/B Maher	Refer to above action.