

Murrumbidgee Customer Advisory Group

Minutes of Meeting

Location: Griffith Exies Sporties Club, 33 Speirs St, GRIFFITH

Date: 12 March 2026

Time: 9.00am

Present: Peter Sheppard (Chair), Justin Sutherland, Chris Palmer, Jeff King, Jenna Bell, Luke Tedesco, James Maguire (online), Ingrid Eyding, Andrea Wilson, Trevor Clark, Greg Packer, Glen Jolliffe, Philip Holliday (observer), Annabel Burge (observer), Andrew Pasquetti (observer).

WaterNSW: Rob O'Neill, Brendan Maher, Jonathan Belej, Shaun Gleeson, Lachlan Browne, Ben Coffey, Kristen Gemmell, Sonia Townsend and Toni Hayes. Online for specific agenda items: Tracey Lawson, Ramona Nica, Phil Glastonbury.

Agency and external staff: Sean Smith, Frances Guest (online), Fabienne d'Hautefeuille (online) (NSW DCCEEW).

Meeting Opened: 9.00am

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

1.1 Acknowledgement of Country

1.2 Apologies: Tanya Thompson, Nick Maynard, Jenny McLeod, Ian Lugsdin.

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 Previous Meeting, 20 August 2025

– Resolved the minutes of meeting held on [20 August 2025](#) be confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting. Taken as read.

T Clark/J Bell (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.

– Members stated that processing times for 710 applications are taking longer and groundwater trades are taking longer to get through (refer to agenda item 3.3).

– Members commented there is a lot happening in the compliance and regulatory space, which is challenging for customers to keep up.

- Top of mind items for the Murrumbidgee CAG for our team were discussed, including flood work approvals/Murrumbidgee FMP, Billabong Creek FMP, RRCP/SDLAM (NSW DCCEE), process for approving groundwater trades and storage levels.
- Members stated they have been working very closely with WaterNSW and the Floodplain Strikeforce on Floodplain Management Plans and have seen more progress in 6 weeks than there has been in years (refer to agenda item 3.5). Customers are very happy with how it is progressing and the help provided.

3. Customer Services:

3.1 Water Accounting & Metering (L Browne)

- 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.
- If customers are having issues with their data in iWAS, there is a 'contact us' button on the homepage to make contact with WaterNSW. Members stated it would be easier if there was a comment box where instant feedback could be provided.
- 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 Billabong Creek Floodplain Management Plan update (S Smith, NSW DCCEE)

- NSW DCCEE provided an overview of the feedback received during Stage 2 public exhibition of the draft Billabong Creek Floodplain Management Plan (FMP) and timeframe for finalisation.
- The department conducted extensive consultation to engage with customers, including a listening tour, letters to all affected landholders, extensive advertisements and emails directly to customers, and 34 submissions were received.
- Key feedback related to spatial refinement, legacy works, rules and assessment criteria, implementation and costs. The department is undertaking an independent peer review of the mapping to enhance mapping accuracy and alignment of management zones at a property scale, with particular focus on existing structures. This will result in minor changes to management zone boundaries. No changes are proposed to the rules and assessment criteria specified in the draft FMPs.
- A 'What We Heard' report will be published mid-March. While the number of submissions was relatively low, the information contained was extensive. The department is working with WaterNSW to ensure the responses and commitments to address concerns are aligned between the agencies. Following this, plans will progress to Ministerial approval and concurrence from the Minister for the Environment, with an anticipated commencement date of 1 July 2026.
- Members stated the accuracy of the mapping was hard to follow, particularly in relation to the zoning. NSW DCCEE advised a lot of work has been done to verify the zones and there will be a series of maps at the end that will show where refinements have been made.
- Members made comment of the lack of involvement of industry in the Strikeforce (refer to agenda item 3.5)
- Members questioned if implementation of the Murrumbidgee FMP provided any learnings and if the timeframe for implementation of the Billabong Creek FMP will move due to any changes required. NSW DCCEE advised that a lot was learned from the Murrumbidgee FMP that have been actioned. The historical plan for Billabong Creek expires on 30 June so the 1 July implementation date stands.

3.3 Groundwater assessment update (F d’Hautefeuille, NSW DCCEEW)

- NSW DCCEEW provided an update on the technical assessment process used to support groundwater trades and bore approvals. WaterNSW refers trades to NSW DCCEEW through an established 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.
- The department acknowledges and understands customers’ frustrations. Unfortunately, there is no way to speed up the process at this time, however the department is working through the backlog as quickly as possible.

3.4 Customer Assessments & Approvals (T Lawson)

- 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 requested statistics on the 10% of trades that are taking longer to process.

Action MBG2603.01: WaterNSW to provide statistics on the 10% of trades that are taking longer to process (how much longer etc).

Responsibility: R Nica

- 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 raised concerns with not seeking consent at all, stating it should be explored further prior to any decision. Customers need more information and assurance it is in their favour to discontinue. WaterNSW confirmed this is only relevant to bores with no Bore Extraction Limit (BEL).
- 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.

3.5 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.
- WaterNSW sought feedback from members on the best way to engage. Members suggested a targeted approach with stakeholders to refine recommendations and develop a simplified process; more education is required for landholders; areas need to be defined; floodplain harvesting should be removed as it not applicable to southern valleys; there was a suggestion that the timeframe should be reset due to the uncertainty (taken under consideration).
- NSW DCCEEW noted it would be helpful to understand what is preventing landholders from applying, as many may not require a flood study under the current rule set. Members stated the reapplication process is complicated, with limited education or support available, and highlighted that recent application refusals have made some landholders hesitant to reapply. WaterNSW encourages customers to utilise the free pre-application meeting to discuss proposed works before applying.
- WaterNSW is also hosting an outreach day with interested landholders in Leeton on 24 and 25 March to discuss their farm-specific floodwork application questions related to the Murrumbidgee FMP. A booking link will be circulated to customers.
- Members questioned if Irrigation Infrastructure Operators (IIOs) have different processes for their applications. NSW DCCEEW advised that IIOs are customers of NSW DCCEEW however are still required to abide by the rules in the FMP. Implementation will apply equally to WaterNSW and NSW DCCEEW customers.
- Members sought advice on assurances for landholders that sit within IIO networks and questioned if they should wait to submit an application. Taken on notice.

Action MBG2603.02: WaterNSW to seek advice from NSW DCCEEW on flood work applications for landholders that sit within Irrigation Infrastructure Organisations (IIOs).

Responsibility: T Lawson

- Additional feedback, or questions, 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 would like to see these statistics at a valley-level.
- For more information go to <https://www.waternsw.com.au/customer-services/water-licensing/flood-work-approvals>

4. OPERATIONS:

4.1 Water Planning & Delivery (S Gleeson)

- WaterNSW presented a review of operations in the Murrumbidgee, including storage and inflow review, system losses and operational surplus, water use summary, allocations, IVT, operations, drought flood risk indicator dashboard, end of year planning, weather outlook and current dam storage scenarios.
- Losses in the Yanco have been quite high this year and we are seeing losses we wouldn't usually see.

- Operational surplus to start of March is 48GL, with eWater holders and IVT deliveries assisting to reduce surplus. Customer order rejections have reduced year on year with the valley totalling ~85GL of water (down from ~240GL the previous year).
- Discussion occurred around the lack of availability in iWAS to amend a water order within lead time, with members commenting having the ability to make the change in iWAS would help to reduce surplus. WaterNSW explained the current process to amend an order and compliance issues.
- Demand is lowering and lower usage and more carryover is forecast for the coming season. WaterNSW will utilise this opportunity to undertake maintenance at our weirs as early as possible.
- Supplementary water will be offered on an event-by-event basis.
- Operational updates are available at [WaterInsights](#). Members requested additional time be added to appointments at the Leeton outreach day to educate water users on WaterInsights. WaterNSW agreed this was a good opportunity for education.

4.2 Regional Operations (B Coffey)

- WaterNSW provided an update on the preventative maintenance plan, completed work orders, current issues and an overview of the North Redbank levee repair in Lake Marimley.
- The ring follower gate valve (RFGV) at Burrinjuck Dam was taken out of service to repair a leak in the hydraulic cylinder with no impact to operations. The hydraulic cylinder on the high level outlet has a minor leak. Investigations commenced and currently repressurising.
- An overview of the field work improvement project was provided, with WaterNSW looking at balancing risk performance and cost. More information will be provided at the next meeting.

4.3 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).
- 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.

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 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: 19 August 2026 (Griffith)

Meeting closed: 12.30pm

Murrumbidgee Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 12 March 2025

New actions

Action number	Action	Responsibility	Status
MBG2603.01	WaterNSW to provide statistics on the 10% of trades that are taking longer to process (how much longer etc).	R Nica	
MBG2603.02	WaterNSW to seek advice from NSW DCCEEW on flood work applications for landholders that sit within Irrigation Infrastructure Organisations (IIOs).	T Lawson	<p>Complete.</p> <p>Structures that are within the Murrumbidgee Irrigation (MI) area of operation that are potentially impacted by an MI work may not meet the definition of a flood work as they may not impact the flow or distribution of floodwater in times of flood. There are some instances where MI works are siphoned/subwayed to allow flood flow through the structures or the MI may not completely divert flood water and landholder's property is still inundated with flood water in certain circumstances/flood events.</p> <p>These will be looked at by WaterNSW in the pre-application meetings with the applicants and/or their consultant, and in circumstances where an MI work may be impacting a landholder's property, WaterNSW will refer to DCCEEW for advice.</p>

Carried forward actions

Action number	Action	Responsibility	Status
	Nil carried forward actions.		