

# Namoi Customer Advisory Group

## Minutes of Meeting

**Location:** WaterNSW, 3 Caroline Way, Narrabri  
**Date:** 18 March 2026  
**Time:** 9.00am

**Present:** Mick Coffey (Chair), Richard Wright, James Hall, Steven Phelps, Bruce Logan, Dianne Hockey, Todd Farrer, Ben Swansbra, Duncan Barnes, James Hockey (observer), Zarni Bear (online).

**WaterNSW:** Rob O'Neill, Brendan Maher, Ken Gee, Michelle Yeaman, Martin Prendergast, Gavin Armstrong, Sam Stokes and Toni Hayes. Online for specific agenda items: Amanda Fuller and Geoff Watson.

**Meeting Opened:** 9.00am

### 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

#### 1.1 Acknowledgement of Country

**1.2 Apologies:** Liam Schwager, Wal Friend, Stewart Eykamp, Dirk Jol, Paul Flewitt, Paul Keyte.

#### 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 Namoi CAG Meeting, 9 September 2025

- Resolved the minutes of the Namoi CAG meeting held on [9 September 2025](#) be confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting. Taken as read.

D Hockey/M Coffey (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 Namoi CAG for our team were discussed, including floodplain harvesting and Floodplain Strikeforce, trade rules and restrictions, northern basin connectivity program, Menindee trigger restrictions, MDBA review, Tamworth water security initiatives and metering compliance and issues.
- 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.

### 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.
- 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](mailto:customer.helpdesk@waternsw.com.au) for assistance in setting up your account.
- The key issues WaterNSW is coming across are meter installation issues with DQPs (initial set up), type of meters installed (Modbus vs Pulse) and water going to the wrong ESID (has to be manually changed).
- Some of the inaccuracy of daily account balances in iWAS (physical meter read different to iWAS) is to do with the type of meter. Pulse meters are more prone to installation issues (calibration) and prone to interference from pumps (might miss a pulse or gain a pulse), which has to be managed by an offset in WAS. Members suggested providing more information/education to water users who have pulse meters.

**Action NAM2603.01:** WaterNSW to send information on pulse meters to Namoi Water for inclusion in its newsletter.

**Responsibility:** L Browne

- Members noted there has been discussion about WaterNSW taking on some aspects of the role of DQPs and asked if there has been any progress on this, given the limited availability of DQPs across NSW and the cost associated with engaging them for minor tasks (eg battery changes). WaterNSW has considered this conceptually, but no plans or decisions have been made.
- WaterNSW advised that the department has introduced a TAFE course for trades to fast-track the qualification with a view to increasing DQP numbers.

#### 3.2 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.
- Further information will be provided once dates are confirmed.
- Members stated it will be very important to have individual sessions in the Namoi when floodplain harvesting takes effect. Landowners want to be ready to go as soon as it is rolled out. Many have commenced work however can't progress until the regulation is in place.

### 3.3 Customer Assessments & Approvals (A Fuller/R Nica/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 expressed concerns about changes to groundwater temporary trades, stating approvals are taking longer than expected, with bore extraction limits (BEL) placed on them and no information provided to customers on any change.
- There has been no change to the process however the department has experienced delays due to the high volume of applications and limited staff. Temporary trades are the highest priority, with groundwater trades the most complex.
- WaterNSW explained the triage process considers whether a BEL is in place, and if not, annual extraction is assessed. If this exceeds 50% of entitlement it is referred to the department. Under the trade dealing principles WaterNSW is required to ensure there is no impact to the water source limit.
- Members highlighted that the cost to irrigators of not getting a trade approved in peak periods is significant.
- 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 present were very supportive of the proposal to discontinue the third-party consent process, noting the timing for feedback (peak cotton picking) is not ideal.
- Feedback on the proposal to discontinue can be provided via email to [engagement@waternsw.com.au](mailto:engagement@waternsw.com.au).

### 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](mailto: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 are interested to see valley-specific metrics.
- Members believe the work of the Strikeforce will benefit the south, however, feel there is inequity between the northern and southern valleys, noting significant time and cost borne by northern valleys where FMPs are already in place, and no ability to address impacts retrospectively. Members stated the south are now getting concessions while the time and cost to the north have been significant, with no benefit to date.
- WaterNSW acknowledged it has been a long journey in the north however progress has been made and there are now opportunities to implement process improvements that will benefit all valleys, including the north.
- 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 Stokes)**

- WaterNSW presented a review of operations in the Namoi, including recent rainfall and outlook, recent actual and statistical inflows, water resource monitoring dashboard, current storage status, water availability and usage.
- **Upper Namoi** operations are order on demand; the 2026/27 season will also be order on demand.
- A Bulk Water Transfer (BWT) is forecast to be required as early as August 2026. WaterNSW noted that historically a BWT has almost always been required the following year once initiated. The transfer rate is expected to be no more than 3500ML/day as higher flows will push channel capacity and cause problems at pump sites. WaterNSW will delay commencement for as long as possible and once initiated operate it hard and fast to maximise efficiency and effectiveness.
- **Lower Namoi** operations are order on demand; the 2026/27 season will also be order on demand. End of system flows will be required with Split Rock plus Keepit combined stored volume above 120GL.
- WaterNSW is currently delivering Commonwealth environmental general security water to Goangra (above Walgett) which will butt up to end of system targets.
- The primary contact for the Namoi valley is Gavin Armstrong; the Namoi on-call number is 02 9685 4347.

##### **4.2 Namoi General Security Individual Water Trading – potential equity issue (K Gee)**

- An overview of impacts of general security temporary transfers from the Lower Namoi to Upper Namoi accounts was presented and discussed, as requested by members.
- After usage has occurred in the Lower Namoi, the water is transferred from the Upper Namoi back to the Lower Namoi account. While permitted under Water Sharing Plan conditions, there is a perceived equity issue for other users in the Lower Namoi when an Available Water Determination (AWD) is announced.
- Due to water users using this method to transfer water, Lower Namoi general security entitlements did not receive any AWDs in October and November 2025. Without use of this method, AWDs at this time would have been sufficient to fill all Lower Namoi general security accounts to 200%. This also has a flow on effect for future AWDs.
- The benefit occurs in wet conditions and when Keepit and Split Rock dams are full.

#### **4.2 Pamamaroo Inlet Regulator project update (G Watson)**

- WaterNSW provided an overview and update on the project, including project drivers, benefits and objectives, key issues and long-term solutions, remedial works, temporary and permanent works approach, water management and project timeline.
- Adverse conditions have caused significant movement and cracking of the Pamamaroo Inlet Regulator structure over many years, which could lead to failure of the structure if normal operations continue.
- Remedial work includes installing temporary coffer dams, new deeper sheet piling and concrete, structural work on the inlet regulator and the surrounding surfaces and will ensure the regulator remains serviceable and protect it from further damage, so that normal operations can continue.
- The structure is currently operating under restrictions including reduced operational measures to limit differential water levels and increased surveillance and monitoring as a short-term measure to reduce the risk of failure.
- It is expected work will commence mid-2026, with 3 months to construct the temporary works and 6-8 months to complete permanent works (weather dependent). RL59.87 at Wetherell has been selected as the trigger level to commence work. WaterNSW is in the process of engaging a contractor who will be ready to commence as soon as triggers are met.
- Members emphasised the urgency to complete the project as soon as possible as it has a big impact on the Namoi and should be a priority.

#### **4.3 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 larger projects in the Namoi valley was provided, including investigation options underway on the radial gates at Keepit Dam, Mollee fishway remedial works and hydrometric renewals (gauges).

#### **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).
- 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 questioned why WaterNSW, as a government agency, is required to make a profit. WaterNSW is a State-Owned Corporation (SOC) and there is an expectation from government for a return on investment (ROI) on infrastructure.
- IPART sets prices using a 20-year historical window and assumes this is an indication of future conditions. Periods of low water usage translate directly into low revenue years, and climatic changes cause a disconnect (drought/flood).
- Members questioned if there has been any consideration on a second round of federal government buy backs and the impact it will have on WaterNSW's revenue. WaterNSW advised that held environmental water (HEW) retains the characteristics of the original licence (ie pays the same fees and charges), however usage can affect the revenue.
- Members questioned if there will be a significant increase in revenue when FPH comes into effect in the Namoi because it didn't commence when it was meant to. WaterNSW advised that our revenue fluctuations are very different to what IPART uses and we try to smooth it out.

## **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.
- 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.
- 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. Data can be viewed as a table, list or schematic. If stakeholders would like this to be available in the app version, WaterNSW can look to incorporate. Ten years of data can be viewed, and older data can be downloaded.
- Discussion occurred around frequency of gauging station data. WaterNSW advised that every gauging station has unique challenges and occasionally will fail in the field. When operational and connected to a network, data is typically available every 15 minutes. Some satellite-based sites report hourly. Increased frequency is possible, however comes at a cost.
- Members noted the need for clear guidance and education on where to access the most reliable data during a rain or flood event. WaterNSW advised the fastest information is via the WaterInsights web platform. Customers can register and set alerts to receive notifications when flows reach user-defined levels.
- Data is being released every three months, and customer feedback is encouraged to support ongoing improvements.

## **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. This can be a single agenda item if required and does not have to be a full CAG meeting.

### **Meeting review and close:**

**Next meeting:** 8 September 2026, Narrabri

**Meeting closed:** 12.10pm

## Namoi Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 18 March 2026

### New actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
<b>NAM2603.01</b>	WaterNSW to send information on pulse meters to Namoi Water for inclusion in its newsletter.	L Browne	

### Carried forward actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
	N/A		