

Namoi Customer Advisory Group

Minutes of Meeting

Location: WaterNSW, 3 Caroline Way, Narrabri
Date: 8 September 2026
Time: 9.00am

Present: Mick Coffey (Chair), Richard Wright, Julia Eather, Paul Flewitt, Wal Friend, James McLoughney, Paul Keyte, James Hockey, Dianne Hockey, Steven Phelps, Liam Schwager, Ben Swansbra, James Hall, Stewart Eykamp, Todd Farrer, Zarni Bear (online) and Chrissy Stannard (online).

WaterNSW: Andrew George, Rob O'Neill, Jerome Douziech, Leeanne Chau, Brendan Maher, Ken Gee, Kate Masters, Gavin Armstrong, Vince Young, Vikrant Malik, Michelle Yeaman, Lachlan Browne, Chris Bath and Toni Hayes. Online for specific agenda items: Amanda Fuller, John Tatkovic and Geoff Watson.

Meeting Opened: 9.00am

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

1.1 Acknowledgement of Country

1.2 Apologies: Jacob Hawley.

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, 18 March 2026

- Resolved the minutes of the Namoi CAG meeting held on [18 March 2026](#) be confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting. Taken as read.

T Farrer/M Coffey (carried)

1.6 Actions arising from minutes

- Refer to action sheet (attached).

1.7 Election of Chairperson

- M Coffey was nominated by D Hockey, seconded by S Phelps. Nil other nominations received. Accepted and carried.

2. WATERNSW UPDATE:

2.1 WaterNSW Executive update (A George)

- WaterNSW provided an overview of its new Corporate Strategy, focused on strengthening core operations, diversifying revenue and modernising the organisation to improve efficiency, customer outcomes and long-term affordability.
- Key organisational challenges were noted, including ageing infrastructure, climate variability, reform uncertainty and increasing costs.
- A significant focus is being placed on delivering capital works, including accelerated infrastructure investment, fishway projects, cold water pollution (CWP) initiatives and ongoing asset renewals and investment.

- Diversifying revenue sources is a key strategic priority to help reduce reliance on traditional revenue streams. As the fourth largest landholder in NSW, WaterNSW is exploring opportunities to generate additional revenue from its land holdings, including carbon market opportunities, pumped hydro and long-duration energy storage projects, including potential partnerships with energy providers.
- WaterNSW highlighted opportunities to leverage artificial intelligence, technology and data to improve business processes and customer service, supported by ongoing investment in workforce capability and digital skills.
- Members queried if WaterNSW has been given any government funding to explore opportunities to generate revenue from its landholdings. WaterNSW advised that while funding received for land management was less than sought, seed funding had been secured through a partnership with NSW DCCEEW and Taronga Zoo. Work is underway to better demonstrate the value of land assets and associated opportunities, with a range of potential initiatives being explored to work with private industry.
- Members sought clarification on government dividends and land tax obligations. WaterNSW advised that, as a State-Owned Corporation, it currently pays an annual government dividend of approximately \$45 million. WaterNSW also advised it has recently been subject to land tax (approximately \$12M) following the transfer of land ownership from WAMC. We are challenging some of those land taxes and assessments are underway.

2.2 WaterNSW's Financial Performance (V Malik)

- WaterNSW is committed to improving transparency, accountability and customer engagement under the Rural Valleys determination. A high-level overview of financial performance was presented, including unaudited FY26 results, the FY27 business plan outlook following IPART's final determinations, and key financial risks, assumptions and future considerations. Valley-specific financial performance was also provided.
- WaterNSW highlighted improved financial sustainability following the organisational transformation program and final IPART determinations. Financial performance has improved substantially, with Rural Valley finances more sustainable than previously forecast. Government affordability contributions remain important to future sustainability and infrastructure investment remains a high priority.
- The determination strengthens WaterNSW's financial position, supporting ongoing service delivery, infrastructure investment and access to funding.
- The Namoi's financial outlook is forecast to improve under the latest IPART determination, supported by customer subsidies, government contributions and operational efficiencies. Revenue share predictions have shifted in favour of water users from 50:50 to 66:34 government/user share. Long-term financial sustainability is dependent on continued government affordability funding.
- ROI is expected to improve and remain positive through to FY29, while the regulated asset base is expected to grow, reflecting ongoing investment in infrastructure, asset renewals and dam safety works. Capital expenditure is forecast to increase through the period, including investment in the Gunidgera Weir Fishway Project, dam safety activities and other asset renewal programs.
- Members queried whether the financial forecasts consider any potential regulatory and policy changes that may affect future water availability and demand, including possible changes to Menindee operating triggers, floodplain harvesting regulations, groundwater SDL outcomes, connectivity and minimum inflow requirements.
- WaterNSW advised the forecasts are based on current regulatory settings and demand assumptions, consistent with the methodology adopted by IPART, including the use of a 20-year rolling average. While this may not be the best method, the current pricing framework includes a demand volatility adjustment mechanism to help manage variations in demand and revenue outcomes. While future reforms may create both positive and negative impacts, the forecasts assume a business-as-usual scenario.
- Members noted that any reduction in water deliveries could adversely affect revenue performance.

3. OPERATIONS:

3.1 Regional Operations (M Yeaman)

- WaterNSW provided an overview of the Namoi Capital Works Program for FY27-FY29, including project funding arrangements, prioritisation process and delivery status.
- Twenty-five projects have been prioritised across renewal, dam safety and environmental programs, with a number of lower-priority renewal projects deferred. Top priority capital works projects include dam safety works, fishway remediation projects, spillway and gate infrastructure renewals, and electrical safety improvements.
- Our teams are thinking outside the box to consolidate projects and come up with solutions that are most cost effective.
- Updates on Mollee Weir and Gunidgera Weir fishway projects, electrical works at Mollee Weir, and the Namoi Electrical Safety Improvement program were also provided. Members questioned if work at Gunidgera will impact access to water. WaterNSW advised the project is still some time away, with potential impacts yet to be determined, and customers will be consulted before any works commence.

3.2 Water Planning and Delivery (K Gee)

- WaterNSW presented a review of operations in the Namoi Valley, including rainfall and weather outlook, inflows, overview of the water resource monitoring dashboard and drought flood risk index, storage status and allocation and usage.
- Recent rainfall across the Namoi and Peel valleys has generally been above average over the past three months. The Bureau of Meteorology outlook indicates neutral rainfall conditions are expected across northern NSW over the next three months.
- Short-term inflows remain low, with Split Rock Dam recording only 1.6GL over the past six months, while Keepit Dam inflows were generally in line with expected conditions. Over the longer term, inflows to both Split Rock and Keepit dams remain below historical percentile averages, reflecting ongoing dry conditions.
- The Namoi Water Resource Monitoring Dashboard, including rainfall, inflow, storage indicators and Keepit Dam storage forecasts was presented, with the Namoi falling under 'dry conditions'. Under minimum scenarios, the level in Keepit Dam will be getting close to dead storage level by the end of the season (includes the bulk water transfer).
- Releases from Keepit Dam have commenced to deliver water to the Lower Namoi.
- 2026-27 allocations commenced at 100% across entitlement categories in both the Upper and Lower Namoi systems. Water usage to date remains relatively low across all licence categories at the start of the water year.
- There have been significant transfers from Lower Namoi to Upper Namoi.
- Upper Namoi operations are currently being managed on an order-on-demand basis; the August bulk water transfer (BWT) pulse has been completed with a further bulk water transfer planned for late October 2026 which will continue to the end of the season, depending on Lower Namoi demand. The delivery loss set aside for the BWT is 5%.
- Lower Namoi operations are also being managed on an order-on-demand basis, with water deliveries gradually increasing. Potential channel capacity constraints on Pian Creek may occur for the peak delivery period between late January and early February. Rostering arrangements may be implemented if required.
- Delivery losses were discussed. WaterNSW advised that a 30% delivery loss factor is applied to general security as a long-term average to account for transmission losses (set aside before an allocation is made), which typically range between 25% and 35% during summer (anticipated to be 30-35% this season). Any unused water set aside for delivery losses is returned to the system and reallocated through normal priority arrangements.
- Operational updates are available at [WaterInsights](#).

3.3 Pamamaroo Inlet Regulator Project Upgrade (G Watson)

- WaterNSW advised that the MDBA and Basin Officials Committee have agreed on the inflow management framework for the project, including decision-making processes and cost-sharing arrangements associated with temporary works.
- Procurement is progressing through a three-stage process. Expressions of Interest have been completed, Stage 2 tender submissions closed on 17 August 2026, and a Request for Tender will be issued to the three shortlisted proponents in late September 2026. Development of the final Business Case is continuing alongside procurement activities.
- Subject to lake conditions and unforeseen events, site mobilisation is expected to commence in January 2027, with construction scheduled for completion by November 2027. Final site handover is anticipated in January 2028.

4. CUSTOMER OPERATIONS AND EXPERIENCE:

4.1 Customer Assessments and Approvals (A Fuller)

- WaterNSW provided an overview of customer service standards, and updates on classifying works, end of water year trade submissions and third party consent for temporary trades.
- Application processing times have increased in some areas due to resources being redirected to support the statewide works classification program. WaterNSW has engaged additional temporary staff and improvements are expected by October 2026.
- Members stated it has become expensive to deal with WaterNSW, with the cost of submitting simple paper applications increasing. WaterNSW advised that IPART sets the prices for our dealings, which were recently increased by CPI.

Floodplain Strikeforce

- WaterNSW provided an update on the work of the Floodplain Strikeforce, including customer education initiatives, updated guidance materials, historical works review, publication of flood work application data and improved pre-application processes.
- A draft Floodplain Strikeforce Interagency Action Plan was released in March for consultation and feedback, and a dedicated working group has been established to review feedback and identify key barriers and potential solutions. The action plan and accompanying What We Heard report is available on our website [here](#).
- A [Guideline for applying for a flood work approval](#) has been developed by WaterNSW and NSW DCCEEW to assist landowners understand what a flood work is, when an approval is required and what is required to apply for a flood work approval.
- A separate flood work approval is no longer required where an existing work is specifically nominated under a Water Supply Work Approval (or combined approval) and its primary purpose is water supply.
- Members asked if there was any consideration for existing flood works already approved but not yet in place. WaterNSW advised if an approval is already in place it will remain in place. Existing approvals are not included in the scope of work of the Strikeforce.

Works Classification Program

- An update on the [works classification program](#) and improvements made in response to customer feedback was provided, including additional guidance materials and support through the WaterNSW website. Customers can also [book an appointment](#) with WaterNSW staff for assistance throughout the classification process.
- Feedback on the [Customer Portal](#) has been shared with our technology teams and improvements are being prioritised based on customer needs.
- Customers are encouraged to review the details of works listed on their approvals and contact WaterNSW if updates are required prior to classifying works.

Temporary Trades

- WaterNSW advised that the earlier end-of-water-year temporary trade submission deadline introduced this year improved processing outcomes and is expected to remain in place for future years and will be proactively communicated to customers going forward.
- June is the highest volume month in the water year, and a new approach was needed to ensure all applications could be processed in time without increasing operational and financial pressures.
- Members stated June is busy as it's the most important month of the year for irrigators and cutting off the trade submissions before the end of the water year is a restriction that makes it very hard for operations.

Third-Party Consent

- No final decision has yet been made regarding potential discontinuation of temporary trade third-party consent for groundwater, as discussed at the previous meeting. Any future changes would be supported by a comprehensive communications and implementation process.

5. BUSINESS PAPERS (taken as read):

- Taken as read.

6. GENERAL BUSINESS:

6.1 H5N1 Avian Influenza (R O'Neill)

- WaterNSW provided an update on the detection of H5 avian influenza in wild birds across multiple Australian states.
- WaterNSW is working with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) to monitor the situation and ensure appropriate preparedness measures are in place. DPIRD is the lead response agency in NSW.
- WaterNSW has developed operational response protocols, identified higher-risk sites and is assessing potential impacts on water quality and water supply operations and is collaborating with DCCEEW on management strategies for priority wildlife locations, including Lake Brewster and the Menindee Lakes.

6.2 Town Water Risk Reduction Program (B Maher)

- WaterNSW is supporting Local Water Utilities (LWUs) across regional NSW to strengthen raw water quality risk management through the Town Water Risk Reduction Program (TWRRP). Funded by NSW DCCEEW, the program supports regional communities in managing water quality risks and building long-term drinking water resilience.
- WaterNSW leads the source water component of the program, focusing on identifying raw water quality risks and supporting local water utilities to proactively manage those risks at the source, recognising source water protection as the first and most effective barrier to safe drinking water.
- To learn more about TWRRP, please visit our [website](#) or email info.TWRRP@waternsw.com.au

6.3 WaterInsights update – customised reporting (P Glastonbury)

- WaterNSW provided a live demonstration of new WaterInsights features introduced in response to customer feedback, including customised daily river reports, daily email and SMS reports sent directly to them based on user-defined parameters, and scheduled notifications.

Meeting review and close:

Next meeting: date TBC, Narrabri

Meeting closed: 12.00pm

Namoi Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 8 September 2026

New actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
	Nil new actions.		

Carried forward actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
	Nil carried forward actions.		