

Murrumbidgee Customer Advisory Group

Minutes of Meeting



Location: MS Teams (online)

Date: 27 March 2024

Time: 9.00am

Present: Tanya Thompson (Chair), Jim Maguire, Nick Maynard, Stephanie Clarke, Justin Sutherland, Jackie Kruger, Hilary Johnson, Peter Sheppard (to 12pm), Jenny McLeod (to 12pm/observer), Trevor Clark (observer).

WaterNSW: Andrew George, Ronan Magaharan, Clair Cameron, David Stockler, Fiona Smith, Brendan Maher, Ben Coffey, Jonathan Belej, Shaun Gleeson, Sonia Townsend, Tessa Hockly, Toni Hayes.

Agency and external staff: Amanda Kelshaw, Kate Drinkwater, Camila Ridoutt (DCCEEW); Tim Gilbert (NRAR); Amanda Johnson and Fiona Court (SEC Newgate).

Meeting Opened: 9.00am.

Acknowledgement of Country

1. Welcome and Introduction

1.1 Apologies: Jenna Bell, David Webb, Glenn Lok, Troy van Berkel, Jack Terblanche.

1.2 Confirmation of Agenda Items:

1.3 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.

1.4 Minutes of Previous Meeting, 23 November 2023:

– Resolved the minutes of meeting held on [23 November 2023](#) be confirmed as a correct record. Taken as read.

*P Sheppard/J Kruger
carried*

1.5 Actions arising from minutes:

– See action sheet attached.

2. Pricing Engagement:

2.1 Engagement on 2025 Pricing Proposal (WaterNSW/NRAR/DCCEEW)

Discussion and actions in this session have been recorded by SEC Newgate (attached).

Customer Advisory Group presentations (attached) in March 2024 sought customer input as planning commences for the price proposal submissions. WaterNSW, DCCEEW and NRAR sought thoughts and feedback on an approach to cost sharing and charges, and the valley-to-valley costs to deliver water with all required regulatory and policy projects included.

Discussion included:

- The cost drivers, and wider value, of NRAR services to achieve compliance with the rules, including a gauge of acceptable levels of compliance across NSW within the context of investment levels.
- A high-level discussion on potential price caps on the increase in WAMC charges, illustrated by high level 'persona' scenarios of customers of different conditions, water entitlements, usage, and valley locations.

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- The revenue requirement of WaterNSW for bulk water delivery - driven by partially controllable and partly uncontrollable cost increases. This included a discussion of a set of scenario options that could reduce the base case cost increase to customer bills in 2025-2030. The scenarios also outlined the risks to WaterNSW.
- An ongoing discussion on the potential introduction of a revenue cap, with modelling demonstrating how the options of a revenue cap or price cap (with varying levels of fixed cost to variable cost ratios) would have worked with the same real water volumes that have occurred over the past 10 years, shown valley by valley.
- A capital expenditure discussion outlining the "must do", "should do", and "could do" projects that pertain to individual valleys, seeking feedback on customer appetite for these projects, including discussions on who should foot the bill for projects with different direct business relevance to customers and community.
- The question of Government-Owned Meters (for relevant valleys), including a potential transition to customer ownership at their end of life, ideas on customer and/or government funding of renewal and replacement, and testing some options with customers who have Government-Owned Meters.
- Further discussion on the proposed investment in 2025-2030 in the customer portal (with an associated lift in the data management and IT systems), that result in the replacement of a legacy customer service systems with newer, more adaptable, and higher capacity system that can meet future customer and water sector needs.

3. Regional Operations:

3.1 Water Planning and Delivery update (S Gleeson)

- WaterNSW presented a review of recent operations, including dam storages and inflow review, rainfall and temperature outlook, cumulative system inflows, system losses, 2023-24 water availability, [IVT account summary](#), eWater delivery, weather outlook, dam storages scenarios, valley operations and operational surplus.
- An overview of Murrumbidgee valley operations presented and discussed. The Water Planning and Delivery team is currently planning for autumn/winter demand and to support winter maintenance activities and is also planning a shortfall exercise with Irrigation Corporations in winter 2024.
- Operational surplus summary (operational loss vs valley order rejection) presented and discussed.
- Members noted a Water Amendment Bill has been passed, with changes to operation of the upper Murrumbidgee and questioned the implications for water users. WaterNSW understands this is in the unregulated portion of the valley and has no impact to the regulated valley.
- WaterNSW asked customers to provide as much information as possible to help determine demand, acknowledging forecast conditions are variable. If customers place an order and plans change (more or less taken), please let us know as soon as possible so we have the ability to make operational changes (whether to store or release). If changes are required within lead time, the process is for customers to go through the Customer Helpdesk (1300 662 077). Members commented it would be an easier process if customers could make these changes in iWAS.
- Customers and stakeholders can visit WaterNSW's [WaterInsights](#) portal for up-to-date operational information.

3.2 Asset Maintenance update (B Coffey)

- WaterNSW provided an update on the Regional Operations operating model. Under the new model, WaterNSW has brought diverse teams (water monitoring, asset maintenance and field services) together under the Area Managers and established Regional Project Delivery Teams (south, north, metro).
- There have been many immediate benefits of sharing resources (staff, plant, equipment) across valleys and throughout the region, including a more consistent approach across the business.

Future efficiencies are being explored, including consolidating offices and workshop facilities (not consolidating different sites, just locations where we have both a workshop and an office, if feasible), working with Dam Safety to reduce dam surveillance, potential to self-deliver some regional projects, a review of existing water monitoring runs etc.

- Members commented that customers already think WaterNSW doesn't have a presence so consolidating sites won't be favourably looked upon and questioned if cost saving in doing this would be significant. WaterNSW advised that we are only considering options where it makes sense to do so. If there is a need to maintain separate sites, we will. Customers will be advised of any changes.
- An overview of the Groundwater IoT (telemetered meters) program was provided. WaterNSW is converting 630 sites from manual to telemetered to provide cost savings and non-financial benefits (safety risk reduction, CO2 emission reduction), as well as providing a significant increase of data for customers.
- An update was provided on progress of erosion issues at Beavers Creek and Coonancoocabil Regulator. High flows in the Murrumbidgee River are impacting the initiation of the repair work and the team is working with Water Planning and Delivery to schedule an outage.
- The 12-tonne working platform at Burrinjuck Dam has been downgraded to 2.5-tonne, which limits oversized vehicles for staff and onsite stakeholders. WaterNSW is reviewing reports and engaging a specialist to inspect and assess condition.

4. Customer Services:

4.1 Customer Services update/Q&A (D Stockler)

- An update on what's happening in the Customer Services space was provided, including meter revalidation, current status of DQP enquiries, hints and tips for DAS alarms, water order to delivery review, debtor management process, improvements and new transaction types now available in the customer portal and a digital roadmap for the Water Market System (WMS).
- WaterNSW provided a response to action MBG2311.04 (refer action sheet) regarding replacement of government-owned meters at end of life as discussed at the last meeting, including overview of historical messaging and costs and what is included in the meter service charge. WaterNSW confirmed there has been no accrual for end-of-life replacement. End-of-life renewal and replacement options discussed at agenda item 4.2.
- WaterNSW is responsible for maintenance and compliance (including revalidation) of government-owned meters. NRAR is aware of this and will engage directly with WaterNSW prior to visiting a site. Customers can refer NRAR to WaterNSW if they are approached about a government-owned meter. Compliance certificates are available on request.
- For revalidation of private meters, water users should engage a DQP. Visit DCCEEW's website for further information [In-situ meter accuracy procedures guide \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.dcceew.gov.au/in-situ-meter-accuracy-procedures-guide).
- WaterNSW advised that the majority of delays are sitting with the DQP as the accountable party to finalise data. WaterNSW is supporting DQPs with resolving issues remotely. Members asked if customers have visibility of tickets sitting with DQPs to know when they are finalised. To date we haven't closed any, but we can look at giving customers visibility of this.
- WaterNSW is reviewing the definition and understanding of 'what a water order is' and how they are managed, to help ensure the ongoing compliance of all aspects of the process and remove ambiguity in this space. More detailed information will be provided at the July meeting to ensure customers are engaged throughout the process and have an opportunity to discuss any proposed changes.

- Enhancements to the WMS (customer portal) include screen sharing tools, guided product selector, in-application support, third party access, a regional office support trial and verification and fact sheets. In the next 6 months, existing customers will be able to view all current Approvals and Licences (May) and make enhancements to registration and management of business details (October).
- New transaction types becoming available include applications for Water Supply Works, Water Use or Combined Approvals and application tracking (May) and making works active/inactive (June).
- The Water Market System is being co-developed and is co-invested by the three water agencies (WaterNSW, DCCEEW and NRAR) into one platform.

Discussion and actions for the pricing component of the Customer Services session have been recorded by SEC Newgate (attached).

4.2 Government-owned Meters – End of Life Renewal and Replacement (R Magaharan)

- Government-owned meters, including a potential transition to customer ownership at end of life, ideas on customer and/or government funding of renewal and replacement, and testing some options with customers who have Government-owned meters was discussed.
- Discussion and actions have been recorded by SEC Newgate (attached).

4.3 Update on Non-Urban Metering Review (C Ridoutt – DCCEEW)

- DCCEEW provided an update on the review of the Non-Urban Metering Reforms (as presented at the last meeting). The purpose of the review was to look at how to remove barriers to implementation and identify practical changes to the rules to improve compliance.
- An issues and options paper was released last year, which confirmed issues identified and general support for improving metering and measurement of water across the state. Submissions and a What We Heard report have been published on DCCEEW's website. <https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/water/nsw-non-urban-water-metering/review-of-the-non-urban-metering-rules#what-we-heard-during-consultation>
- The review is now complete and DCCEEW will provide feedback and final recommendations to the Minister for consideration. Once considered, the Minister will be looking to advise and provide certainty on the way forward.
- Further information on the non-urban metering review can be found on [DCCEEW's website](#).

5. Presentations/Consultation:

5.1 CAG Survey Results (B Maher)

- WaterNSW provided an overview of the results of the CAG Survey conducted in December 2023 (provided with business papers), including state-wide and valley-specific results. The purpose of the survey is to help us better understand how the CAG process is working for customers (what works well, what doesn't work, suggestions for future meetings etc).
- Further input and feedback was sought from CAG members on proposed engagement into the future.

Feedback/discussion:

- o drop-in sessions are a good idea, dependent on timing.
- o agree that coming out to regions and being seen will help engagement. We have lost WaterNSW services in the areas, the face-to-face no longer exists. One way to get people to be engage is to be seen in the regions. May only get a few people to start with but word of mouth will increase numbers/gradually building up the trust and engagement.
- o incorporating a learning/education aspect would be great eg WaterInsights. The average irrigator would not be aware of how much information is available in WaterInsights and how

to find it, so doing some training would be good. And good to build up momentum of online platforms as you start to roll it out.

- most of our members sit inside the IIOs so talking to WaterNSW doesn't affect them much. Separating WaterNSW with other departments is a good idea.
 - I find the meetings interesting and the information is important. Is up to us to take this information wider. Big days but informative, the information is needed. Getting people enthused is a problem. Need next generation coming in and getting involved - don't know how you do it.
- The survey will be re-opened and the link re-sent to all members to provide opportunity to those who have not yet contributed. We want to hear from all members, primary and alternate, including those who have not attended a meeting in some time.
 - WaterNSW will provide some options to CAG members for input prior to the next meeting.

6. Business Papers:

- Noted and taken as read.

7. General Business:

7.1 Tour of Burrinjuck Dam – 30 April 2024

- As requested by CAG members last year, WaterNSW has organised a tour of Burrinjuck Dam on Tuesday 30 April 2024, commencing 10am-1pm (TBC).
- A placeholder will be sent to CAG members today and further details provided once finalised.

7.2 Chairmanship of CAG

- Tanya Thompson advised this was her last meeting as Chair, as her 3 consecutive years of tenure are over. An election will be held at the next meeting.
- Members thanked Tanya for her time and effort chairing the meetings.

Meeting Review and Close

Next Meeting: 1 August 2024

Meeting closed: 3.00pm

Murrumbidgee Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 27 March 2024

Carried forward actions

Action No.	Action	Responsibility	Status
MBG2311.01	WaterNSW to provide an update on channel desilting work at North Redbank Weir.	B Coffey	Complete. The customer has completed the works to his outlet gate. WaterNSW will continue to drain the channel and remove cumbungi, with an outage planned for June. Desilting is not planned at this stage.
MBG2311.02	WaterNSW to investigate delays with correcting outages in the Government-owned meter fleet and contact P Sheppard and N Maynard out of session to discuss.	M Brooks	Complete. Members highlighted continued supply issues, with some customers still waiting on LIDs for GOMs, and told they will be available after Easter. Members commented it may be legislation but is difficult if there is no one to do installations.
MBG2311.03	WaterNSW to confirm the following, for discussion at the next meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – check what communication went out to Murray and Murrumbidgee on what the government-owned meter charge paid for once it was in place; – provide confirmation of what the current fee covers; – examine if there is a case to be made to the Commonwealth to replace the assets; – check original pitch documents about the transfer of government-owned meters and confirm any statements about future replacement. 	D Stockler	Complete. Refer to agenda item 4.1. WaterNSW confirmed there has been no accrual for end-of-life replacement of government-owned meters.

New actions

Action No.	Action	Responsibility	Status
	Nil new actions.		

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