

# Lachlan Customer Advisory Group

## Minutes of Meeting

**Location:** Agriculture and Research Centre, Fifield Rd, CONDOBOLIN

**Date:** 15 October 2024

**Time:** 9.30am

**Present:** Gordon Turner (Chair), Bryan Goldsmith, Tom Green, Andrea Wilson, Tim Bell, William Back, Glenn Daley (online) and Jo Lenehan (online).

**WaterNSW:** Brendan Maher, Eddy Taylor, Joson Lam, Kristen Carter, Jack Finch, Sonia Townsend (online) and Toni Hayes. Online for specific agenda items: Jonathan Belej, Shaun Gleeson, David Stockler, Russell Cocks, Maritn Brooks, Geoff Watson, Justin Cairns, Warwick Hansen, Babu Radhakrishnan.

**Agency and external staff for specific items:** Dan Connor, David Andersen and Mustak Shaikh (NSW DCCEEW).

**Meeting Opened:** 9.30am

### 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

#### 1.1 Acknowledgement of Country:

**1.2 Apologies:** Michael Payten, Jock Coupland, Ed Fagan, Michael Storrier.

#### 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 Election of Chairperson

– Gordon Turner was nominated by Tom Green, seconded by Bryan Goldsmith. Nil other nominations received.

– Accepted and carried.

#### 1.6 Minutes of Previous Meeting, 16 July 2024:

– Resolved the minutes of meeting held on [16 July 2024](#) be confirmed as a correct record. Taken as read.  
G Turner (carried)

#### 1.7 Actions arising from minutes

– Refer to action sheet (attached).

### 2. CUSTOMER SERVICES:

#### 2.1 Customer Services update (D Stockler)

– WaterNSW provided a Customer Services update, including water ordering and compliance, third party consent for groundwater temporary trades, customer experience improvements, new features in the water market system (customer portal), evaporation calculation update and IPART submission update.

– WaterNSW clarified daily extractions impact **water delivery**, not **water order compliance**. How the volume is taken over the days specified in the water order (100ML over 10 days) has no bearing on compliance but **can impact** water delivery (end of system losses or delivery shortfalls) if the daily extraction is different to the water order.

– To ensure compliance, daily extractions in aggregate must not exceed the total order volume, however **customers are encouraged to be a good neighbour by ordering as you intend to take** to maximise the

resource and minimise any third-party impact. This will also assist the Water Planning and Delivery team to effectively manage the system.

- If a customer's intention to take changes after a water order is placed, they should notify WaterNSW as soon as possible so decisions during travel time can be made to minimise delivery losses, maximise AWDs etc.
- A new **third-party consent process** for groundwater temporary trades came into effect on 1 July 2024. Based on customer feedback, WaterNSW has updated documentation and is investigating options to make it easier for applicants whilst still managing our legal obligations (including an objections-style process or an optional fee for facilitation service (cost recovery) where WaterNSW will identify and seek consent on behalf of the applicant). Alternatively, the current consent process will remain in place for applicants who wish to complete the process themselves.
- Information on the triage and assessment process and FAQs on trading water can be found at [Trading water - WaterNSW](#) and [Groundwater temporary trades \(71T Dealings\)](#)
- Customer experience improvements include changes to the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system based on customer feedback; enhancement to features in iWAS (ML converter calculator tool and how-to videos); a free opt-in [recording and reporting SMS reminder service](#); and trialling customer outreach days in towns where we don't have a physical presence.
- Enhancements to the Water Market System (customer portal) presented and discussed, including future co-existence between WLS and WMS, allowing registered customers to view the details of their licences and approvals in one place.
- An update on the **evaporation calculation** was provided. A revised methodology was agreed with NSW DCCEEW and Lachlan CAG members, to be effective for the 2024/25 water year. NSW DCCEEW advised a WSP change gazetted on 26 September (effective 4 October) is not retrospective. The original methodology will be applied to Q1 water year (24/25) and the new methodology will be applied for Q2, Q3 and Q4 (applied at the end of the water year).
- WaterNSW lodged its Rural and Greater Sydney Bulk Water pricing submissions and joint WAMC submission to IPART on 30 September. Due to time constraints, some WAMC items were not able to be discussed as part of the broader consultation process (metering, floodplain harvesting and consent transactions). WaterNSW will brief customers on these three functions once IPART begins the review process and prior to the public hearings via state-wide online sessions with CAG members and customers.

## 2.2 Non-Urban Metering Reform review update (D Connor, NSW DCCEEW)

- NSW DCCEEW provided an update on the Non-Urban Metering Reform review. The purpose of the review was to identify ways to accelerate the implementation of the non-urban metering reforms by identifying practical changes to the rules that will help deliver the reform faster, create opportunities to reduce costs, make the rules easier to understand, implement, comply with and enforce, and make the system work more efficiently.
- Key recommendations of the review centre around reprioritising efforts towards larger water users (concentrating resources towards larger water users where they will have the greatest impact), increasing meter installation and validation rate (providing better support and training for the DQP workforce) and supporting integrity in water resource management (enabling more effective use of compliance and enforcement tools).
- Proposed key changes to the metering rules and implementation priorities presented and discussed. A DQP Concierge Program will be available in the coming months, offering tailored support to DQPs and customers by providing access to expert support, simplifying the compliance process and improving data management. Viability for and lack of availability of DQPs discussed, now and into the future.
- Members questioned how the changes to the revalidation process will occur and what is being proposed.

**Action LAC2410.01:** NSW DCCEEW to provide information on the meter revalidation process when available and what is being done to ensure it can be done when the date comes around.

**Responsibility:** D Connor (NSW DCCEEW)

- Public consultation on regulation changes will occur in November 2024, a what we heard report to be released early 2025, changes by March 2025, then a disallowance period of 15 sitting days. Once the regulation is made, new conditions will take effect (current obligations exist until the rules are changed). Unintended works will be phased over 2025.
- Members commented there are irrigators spending money on telemetry under the current rules who won't have the same requirement when regulations are changed. This was acknowledged by NSW DCCEEW however noted that the process needs to take place.
- Members noted connectivity is an issue for some, with many sites not able to receive a 4G signal. Customers in a blackspot can apply for a telemetry exemption and will only need an LID and a meter. The telemetry exemption tool can be used to identify network coverage - [Telemetry coverage tool | NSW Government Water](#)
- Members stated the metering reforms have been very disappointing and didn't address the fundamental issues, stating the requirements that go with meeting AS4747 has caused a lot of issues for irrigators and DQPs.

### **3. OPERATIONS:**

#### **3.1 Water Planning and Delivery update (J Belej)**

- WaterNSW presented a review of recent operations in the Lachlan and Belubula valleys, including storage and inflow update, dam operations, water availability and account balance, weather outlook and long-range forecast (October to January), operational surplus summary, comparison of inflows since 2022 flood and storage forecast.
- The Lachlan Airspace Reference Panel (LARP) met on the 8 October and agreed to a storage target of 100% as irrigation season has commenced as required by WSP rule.
- Translucent delivery was triggered on 2 July; 13 July; 15 July; 19 July; 16 August and 29 August. NSW DCCEEW approved a request by WaterNSW to cap the translucent releases at around 4.5GL/day from Wyangala Dam to support Lake Brewster flood repairs. WaterNSW will seek approval to lift the constraint once Lake Brewster repair project is complete.
- Lake Brewster weir flow is still curtailed to 5000ML/day flow over the crest. The inlet to Lake Brewster channel has a maximum level of 2.525m (which allows for a flow rate of 600-960ML/day depending on the Lake level). There are projects works currently being undertaken for these issues at Lake Brewster to be resolved. During this time, an added constraint of maximum level in the inlet channel of 1.900m, will be in place to ensure that the water level will not affect the works area. Lake Brewster storage is still under operational constraint of 79.5%
- Members questioned why operational losses in the October resource assessment are higher compared to last year, stating there is not a lot of confidence in the numbers. Taken on notice.

**Action LAC2410.02:** WaterNSW to clarify the data around operational losses in the October 2024 resource assessment.

**Responsibility:** J Belej

- Members stated the response from NSW DCCEEW in relation to action LAC2407.01 regarding the water account reset rules does not make sense and requested clarification, suggesting a meeting with NSW DCCEEW to explain further. WaterNSW to seek further clarification from NSW DCCEEW (refer to action sheet).

#### **3.2 Regional Operations update (E Taylor)**

- WaterNSW provided an update on preventative maintenance (routine) and completed work orders in the valley and a summary of current issues.

- Lake Brewster Weir, inlet channel and storage – storage level maintained at 79.5%. maintenance at erosion sites completed late September. See effect column.
- WaterNSW conducted a site inspection at Cucumber Weir on 1 October 2024, as requested by members. Remedial work has been done to prevent further damage and WaterNSW will continue to do corrective and remedial maintenance on the structure as required. If any major work is done there is potential it could trigger a fish passage.
- Members stated the main issue is build-up of sediment which is pushing more water over the weir than it should. Local landholders are working with council (proponent to do the works) to find a solution.
- An overview of planned outages presented and discussed (Wyangala Dam, Jemalong Weir, Lake Brewster Inlet and Outlet Regulators, Willandra Offtake Regulator, Lake Cargelligo Fishway). The team works closely with Water Planning and Delivery to ensure the correct time to undertake works.

### **3.3 Lake Brewster works update (G Watson)**

- WaterNSW established an Incident Management Team (IMT) to accelerate emergency works for levee C washouts 1 and 2 as these were restricting flows. Works commenced on 12 August and are now complete (overview of work provided). Permanent works are expected to commence in early 2025.
- The focus has moved to commence work on the siphon and bridge embankments, which will allow heavy vehicle access. Quotes have been received, tender interview complete and final recommendations are in progress. Members stated commencement of work and potential outages needs to be communicated to customers early for planning purposes for the next 3-6 months.

**Action LAC2410.03:** WaterNSW to provide information on the timeframe for commencement of the bridge works at Lake Brewster.

**Responsibility:** G Watson

- More information can be found at <https://www.waternsw.com.au/projects/lake-brewster-flood-recovery-works>.
- WaterNSW is replacing the Bally Rogan Bridge over the Lake Brewster Inlet Channel near Lake Brewster on the Lachlan Valley Way. The existing bridge is showing significant signs of deterioration and needs replacing. Work to build a temporary bridge will start in early 2025. The demolition of the existing bridge and construction of a replacement bridge will be completed late-2025, weather permitting.

### **3.4 Lake Cargelligo Embankment Upgrades (G Watson)**

- Members sought an update on the Lake Cargelligo embankment upgrade and costings. WaterNSW advised we will be returning to site early 2025 and are currently in commercial negotiations with the previous contractor.
- We are about to commence heritage clearing works for remaining works. Have approvals to go ahead and have contractor on board and hoping to go to tender in November. We will go back to the Board with a final forecast to complete in February that will allow us to commence works.
- Members requested an update on the new projected costings to complete the project. WaterNSW advised that an update will be provided once we've reengaged with the market, which will give a better forecast of cost to complete. If relevant information is available before the next CAG meeting, we can call an out of session online meeting, otherwise we will update at the next meeting.

### **3.5 Hydrometric Networks Remote Sensing Program (HNRS) - unlocking the past and future with satellite remote sensing products and tools (M Shaikh, NSW DCCEEW)**

- NSW DCCEEW provided an overview of the HNRS program, delivered in collaboration with the NSW and Queensland state governments. The objective of the program was to improve transparency and accountability in water management; metering and measurement of water information to enable regulators to monitor compliance; and compliance outcomes.
- The focus was on the northern Murray-Darling Basin and work was undertaken in the Gwydir, Border Rivers, Namoi, Macquarie-Castlereagh and Barwon valleys. The team was responsible for delivering a number of milestones: on-farm water storage monitoring dataset; irrigated crop area dataset; Lidar

acquisition; and piloting Synthetic Aperture Radar satellite system. An overview of each of the project areas was presented and discussed.

- The Department is in the final stages of validation for the Lachlan valley (hasn't been released yet).

#### **4. PRESENTATIONS/CONSULTATION:**

##### **4.1 Town Water Risk Reduction Program (J Lam)**

- The Town Water Risk Reduction Program (TWRRP) was established by NSW DCCEEW to identify long-term solutions to the challenges and risk to providing water supply in regional towns.
- WaterNSW is working collaboratively with Central Tablelands Water and other local councils and water utilities across regional NSW as part of this program to reduce risks to source water quality and dam safety and help build the resilience of communities. One of the learnings from the last drought is that better coordination is needed during drought between agencies and local water utilities.
- The NSW Government provided funding for the TWRRP so that WaterNSW can provide vital support to local water utilities in regional and remote areas to help improve water security, safety, reliability and quality. Costs will not be borne by customers.
- The program is a whole-of-government response that brings the strengths of the major entities in the water sector to local councils, who can choose to engage with the skills and knowledge that will best assist them.
- An overview of the program with Central Tablelands Water was presented and discussed.

##### **4.2 Update on 2025 Pricing Proposal (B Maher and K Drinkwater, NSW DCCEEW)**

- WaterNSW lodged its Rural and Greater Sydney Bulk Water pricing submissions and joint WAMC submission to IPART on 30 September.
- IPART will publish submissions and release the issues paper on 1 November inviting feedback from the community, with public hearings to be held on 14 (Rural Valleys and Greater Sydney) and 21 November (WAMC). Customers are encouraged to make a submission to the issues papers and participate in the public hearings.
- Since we last presented, the numbers have remained consistent, and the scenarios presented to CAGs will be reflected in our submission. Valley fixed vs variable ratios have not changed (except Lachlan to 80:20).
- Regional pricing has been included as a potential scenario for years to come and IPART would need to consult widely on this concept before it would be seriously considered.

##### **4.3 Future CAG Engagement and Next Term of Office (B Maher)**

- WaterNSW is taking a refreshed approach to CAGs in 2025 and has included feedback from CAG members to inform future engagement. We will move to 2 face-to-face meetings per year starting 2025, with the option of an additional online meeting as required or requested.
- Additional engagement opportunities for customers may include community drop-in centres, field days, tailored online information sessions, local dam visits for customers and community, river runs in the lead up to peak water use periods, online Water Planning and Delivery updates in times of need and potential for attendance at water user group meetings (as requested).
- WaterNSW is working on developing a new CAG format with NSW DCCEEW's Water Group, considering the feedback that has been provided by the CAGs. The new format will take better coordination and efficiency of engagement into account and will be launched in 2025. NRAR will attend on an as-needs or as-requested basis.
- A new policy for engagement with customers and community is being developed (effective 1 July 2025). A draft version will be shared with CAG Chairs in February and with members at the next CAG meeting.
- Members commented that the Department needs to engage and attend CAG meetings going forward.

**Next term of office:**

- The current term of office ends 30 June 2025. WaterNSW will call for nominations ~April 2025 by writing to all current members and representative groups as well as advertising via media and social media. Current members are encouraged to reapply through their nominating representative group.
- WaterNSW invited members to bring along other members of their representative group and other eligible organisations to the next CAG meeting to see what the CAGs are about.

**4.4 Renewable Energy Storage Program (J Cairns)**

- WaterNSW provided an overview of the Renewable Energy Storage Program (RESP) in which WaterNSW sought private investment to unlock suitable land and assets to develop commercially viable, large-scale renewable energy and storage projects. Following a competitive tender process, WaterNSW granted selected developers (ACEN, UHH, ZEN) the right to investigate agreed sections of WaterNSW land.
- All development and construction activities and costs associated with the projects, including property engagement and environmental (EIS) approvals, will be borne by the developer. Project timeline presented and discussed.
- Into the future, WaterNSW is aspiring to bring 2GW of additional shovel-ready pumped hydro energy storage projects to market by leveraging our land and assets. As a first step, WaterNSW will soon start Government-led pumped hydro feasibility studies to identify suitable locations. If the projects progress, they could supply electricity to up to two million homes.
- WaterNSW is exploring how it can build on the success of the RESP, and whether more sites across regional NSW could also host pumped hydro energy storage projects. We hope to start delivering this next phase from late 2024 and will keep customers updated as work progresses.
- More information on the program is available at [Renewable Energy and Storage Program - WaterNSW](#)

**5. BUSINESS PAPERS:**

- Taken as read.

**6. GENERAL BUSINESS:**

- Nil general business raised.

**Meeting review and close:**

**Next meeting:** 9 April 2025

**Meeting closed:** 1.10pm

## Lachlan Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 15 October 2024

### New actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
LAC2410.01	NSW DCCEEW to provide information on the meter revalidation process when available and what is being done to ensure it can be done when the date comes around.	D Connor (NSW DCCEEW)	
LAC2410.02	WaterNSW to clarify the data around operational losses in the October 2024 resource assessment.	J Belej	
LAC2410.03	WaterNSW to provide information on the timeframe for commencement of the bridge works at Lake Brewster.	G Watson	

### Carried forward actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
LAC2407.01	NSW DCCEEW to provide further information on the water account reset process.	S Chowdhury (NSW DCCEEW)	<p>The reset conditions are better clarified in the plan after the amendment of December 2022. Wyangala, Lake Cargelligo and Lake Brewster are to be simultaneously full for the first time in six months (clause 45.3). There are two flexibilities on this regard explained in next two paragraphs.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The department may deem a storage full at a lower level for structural or environmental reason only. An example of structural reason is the current repair work of Lake Brewster limiting its capacity to 79.5%. The environmental reason may include maintaining a level to complete a bird breeding event. The likely consideration of a lower storage is generally communicated early to remove uncertainty from the decision-making process.</li> <li>2. The department may not wait until the day storages are full. This is the situation when the operator notifies that the storages will fill imminently from inflows already visible. Typically, Wyangala will be making flood mitigation release to reduce the flood peak rate at that time. This has been referred as 'wet pre release'. This was the case in 28/9/22 reset when Wyangala became full about 11 days later and the lakes were full all along.</li> </ol> <p>Neither of the above 2 flexibilities matches the following situation. Wyangala is kept lower expecting a design inflow over coming months agreed by Lachlan Airspace Reference Panel. The corresponding release is referred as 'dry pre release'. This state does not satisfy the reset conditions.</p>

			<p><b>July 2024 discussion:</b> Members stated the information provided by NSW DCCEEW does not make sense and requested further clarification, suggesting a meeting with NSW DCCEEW to explain further.</p> <p>WaterNSW will seek further clarification from NSW DCCEEW.</p>
<b>LAC2403.02</b>	WaterNSW to organise a 'river run' in the Lachlan valley, in collaboration with Lachlan CAG members.	B Maher	WaterNSW is looking to do this as part of the future engagement process (refer to agenda item 5.1)
<b>LAC2407.03</b>	WaterNSW to provide a breakdown of current status of DQP enquiries (data) specific to the Lachlan valley for future CAG presentations.	B Arabin / D Stockler	<b>Complete. Refer to agenda item 2.1.</b>