

# Greater Sydney Customer Advisory Group

## Minutes of Meeting



**Location:** Cliftons, Margaret St, Sydney

**Date:** 6 March 2024

**Time:** 9.30am

**Present:** Peter Griffiths (acting Chair), Matthew Trapp (online), Anthony Muscat, Brenden Logue, Gary Wallace, Marina Hollands (online), Daylan Cameron (online) and Joshua Muscat (observer).

**WaterNSW:** Brendan Maher, Ramen Charan, Brian Mayhew, Michael Martinson, Russell Cocks, Toni Hayes and online: David Stockler, Ronan Magaharan, Joe Pizzinga, Clair Camerson, Sonia Townsend.

**Agency and external staff for specific agenda items:** Ria Pryce, Sarah Boyd, David Andersen, Kate Drinkwater, Amanda Chadwick, Amanda Kelshaw (DCCEEW/online); Brett Bates (NRAR); Karim Ezzeldin and Jackson Streeter (SEC Newgate).

**Meeting Opened:** 9.30am.

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Welcome and introductions

#### 1.2 Acknowledgement of Country

1.3 **Apologies:** Jenny Zadro.

#### 1.4 Confirmation of Agenda Items:

#### 1.5 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.

#### 1.6 Minutes of Previous Meeting, 1 November 2023:

- Resolved the minutes of meeting held on [1 November 2023](#) be confirmed as a correct record. Taken as read.

*A Muscat/B Logue  
carried*

#### 1.7 Actions arising from minutes

- See action sheet attached.

### 2. Operations:

#### 2.1 Water Planning and Delivery update (R Charan)

- WaterNSW provided a review of operations, including total system storage, rainfall, inflows, environmental releases, forecast and water quality.
- The trigger to recommence Shoalhaven transfers is 75% of total system storage. The earliest expected date for storage decline to 75% is December 2024 (under a no rain scenario).
- There was 34.5GL of environmental releases in January 2024. WaterNSW has been working under the 2011 Water Sharing Plan (WSP) works approval as the protocols for the 2023 have not been issued to WaterNSW. It is expected DCCEEW will issue a WAL package soon. In the new WSP there is a revised 80<sup>th</sup> percentile based on extra 10 years of data which allow for scaling for reducing storage levels.

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- Water quality scientists are monitoring conditions and changing supply configuration to minimise risk of algal issues close to the surface. Surface waters are warming bringing a higher risk of algal blooms. These are being managed by the use of destratification systems where available, and multi-level offtake drawing from deep in the water column in the stratified lakes.
- Members commented that aeration has been talked about for Oberon Dam for 10 years and have been told in the past that it is not considered acceptable to minimise stratification, now being told something different. WaterNSW advised that a destratification system for Oberon is currently included in the candidate list in our funding submission to IPART, which is still being finalised.

## 2.2 Regional Operations – Asset Maintenance and Projects (B Mayhew)

- An update of the Sydney regional operations area was presented, including an overview of flood damage repair work undertaken in the catchment.
- Under the new operating model, WaterNSW has changed the structure of its field teams to group teams together under Area Managers and is actively working with the objective of reducing operating costs. Discussed.

**Action GS2403.01:** Arrange a meeting with FRWS customers (Energy Australia, Oberon Council and Lithgow Council) to discuss WaterNSW's capex program/projects, with potential for regular meetings.

Responsibility: B Mayhew

## 3. Non-Urban Metering Reforms:

### 3.1 Non-Urban Metering Review update (R Pryce – DCCEEW/online)

- 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.
- The compliance date for Coastal valleys is December 2024 and advice has been provided to extend this date. DCCEEW will provide the outcome of this asap.
- Members questioned why NRAR is currently attending sites if the review has not been complete. DCCEEW advised that while the review is underway there is no change to the regulations and current compliance expectations remain in place. WaterNSW will discuss with the customer to get a clear understanding of the issues/circumstances and feedback will be provided to NRAR.
- Further information on the non-urban metering review can be found on [DCCEEW's website](#).

## 4. Presentations/Consultation:

### 4.1 Engagement on 2025-30 Pricing Proposal (WaterNSW, DCCEEW and NRAR)

**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.
- 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.

## **5. Customer Services:**

### **5.1 Customer Services update (D Stockler/online)**

- An update on what's been happening in the Customer Services space was provided, including 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 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, DCCEE and NRAR) into one platform.

- **Discussion and actions for the pricing component of this session have been recorded by SEC Newgate (attached).**

## **6. Presentations/Consultation:**

### **6.1 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 Members like the idea of separating agencies so they can leave if content is not relevant.
- o not sure there's any value in bringing Councils together; understand providing information once to a group is better than multiple however individual areas/regions need to have own meetings - everywhere is different. As part of the CAG, we all engage and are all part of the larger customer group – keeping it to catchments as gives us an understanding of our whole system (how you break it down needs a conversation).
- o stick with 3 meetings, but if you're prepared to spend time pre/post session with irrigators/council, spread out the day (once per year) where you spend more time with irrigators than councils etc.
- o open to the possibility of scaling back to 2 CAGs per year, as long as there is other engagement to fill the gaps (and provided statewide engagement is not used as a 'tick the box' exercise)
- o use the results of the survey to dictate how you move forward.
- o like idea of focus meetings 1/3 and also moving the meeting around – ie move out of Sydney. Statewide – like to hear focus and direction of WaterNSW, would be beneficial for us all.
- 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.

## **7. Business Papers:**

- Noted and taken as read.

## **8. General Business:**

- Nil new general business raised.

### **Meeting Review and Close**

**Next Meeting:** 3 July 2024

**Meeting closed:** 2.30pm

## Greater Sydney Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 6 March 2024

### Carried forward actions

| Action No.       | Action  | Responsibility        | Status              |
|------------------|---|-----------------------|---------------------|
| <b>GS2307.04</b> | WaterNSW to look at how the financial reports are presented to the CAG and how the information could be provided in more granular detail for customers. | M Martinson /<br>J Su | <b>In progress.</b> |

### New actions

| Action No.       | Action  | Responsibility | Status           |
|------------------|---|----------------|------------------|
| <b>GS2403.01</b> | Arrange a meeting with FRWS customers (Energy Australia, Oberon Council and Lithgow Council) to discuss WaterNSW's capex program/projects, with potential for regular meetings. | B Mayhew       | <b>Complete.</b> |

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