

Barwon-Darling Customer Advisory Group

Minutes of Meeting

Location: Back O'Bourke Function Centre, Kidman Way, BOURKE

Date: 17 October 2024

Time: 10.00am

Present: Ian Cole (Chair), Bruce Coward, David Walker, Leonie Brown, David Kirby, David Miller (online), Greg Hill (online), Jane Keir (online), Justin McClure (online) and Debbie Love (observer, online), John Gordon (observer, online).

WaterNSW: Brendan Maher, Jack Finch, Kristen Carter, Sonia Townsend (online) and Toni Hayes. Online for specific agenda items: Partha Saha, Kate Masters, Damien Ashlin, Shashika Korotta-Gamage and David Stockler, Russell Cocks and Martin Brooks.

Agency and external staff: Dan Connor (NSW DCCEEW), and online for specific items: Eugene Moore, Peter Hyde and Sikdar Rasel (NSW DCCEEW).

Meeting Opened: 9.30am

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

1.1 Acknowledgement of Country:

1.2 Apologies: Matt Miles, Tim Hosking, Greg Rummery.

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 Previous Meeting, 18 July 2024:

– Resolved the minutes of meeting held on [18 July 2024](#) be confirmed as a correct record. Taken as read.
L Brown/B Coward (carried)

Actions arising from minutes

– Refer to action sheet (attached).

2. OPERATIONS:

2.1 Water Planning and Delivery update (P Saha)

– WaterNSW provided a review of recent operations in the Barwon-Darling, including recent rainfall and comparison, BOM rainfall outlook, measured inflows, tributary inflows, current flows, active management and managing EOLs.

– Average rainfall has been observed over the last 3 months, with inflows from NSW regulated valleys. The flow at Bourke peaked near 3500ML/day during August from Namoi inflow and resulted in a peak over 2300ML/day at Wilcannia in early 2024.

– Environmental water delivery has commenced from Burrendong Dam (Macquarie valley) and likely to continue over the next few months. End of system flow is arriving from NSW regulated valleys as the irrigation season commenced.

– WaterNSW is currently publishing daily announcements for active management. Inflows are receding with limited access at this time. Around 2GL of active environmental water arrived from the Border,

Gwydir and Macquarie valleys during July-September 2024, with 20GL protected through EOI during this period.

- Account balances in iWAS are not updated for extractive licence holders until meter readings are entered. Licence holders should ensure that, if they leave an enduring EOI in place therefore continue to receive announcements to take water, they do not exceed their legal take for the year.
- The process for managing EOIs to minimise impacts on other water users in the same management zone was presented and discussed. WaterNSW reiterated the need to enter accurate EOIs to accurately reflect your intention to take water. If you don't take it, you are impacting access within your zone.

2.2 Active Management review update (E Moore, NSW DCCEEW)

- NSW DCCEEW provided an update on the active management annual review 2023/24. Submissions have been extended to end of October. The report will be a shorter summary report focussed on new issues. Data for 2023/24 shows less mismatch due to WaterNSW adjusting announcements based on inaccurate EOIs. The key message is that water users need to update their EOIs for intention to take.
- The procedures manual to put recommendations into effect is being redrafted and customers will be consulted on key changes that affect stakeholders before the end of the water year.
- An update on work being done to ensure held environmental water (HEW) that flows from Queensland to intersecting streams is protected was provided. NSW DCCEEW is currently drafting the extraction risk assessment and developing the accounting arrangement, which should be implemented by the next water year (aiming to publish in December). Timeline provided.
- Members questioned what work has been done to unhook the intersecting streams, stating having intersecting streams linked to other WSPs is problematic.

Action BD2410.01: NSW DCCEEW to provide information on how boundaries for WSPs are determined (in relation to intersecting streams).

Responsibility: E Moore (NSW DCCEEW)

- As part of the loss accounting arrangement, NSW DCCEEW is calculating average loss rates for HEW through the Intersecting Stream and is aware of the various flow paths. The arrangement aims to ensure that realistic and accurate loss rates are applied so that what arrives in the Barwon-Darling is protected under active management rules.
- Members queried if NSW DCCEEW is looking at what is flowing into Menindee Lakes. The Department is working closely with the MDBA on the Northern Basin Connectivity Trial and is accounting for the volume that arrives in the Lakes. Evaporation is taken into account, before active environmental water inflows are released into the Lower-Darling. One release has been made to date, with the intention for more HEW releases once accounting and other assurance work for the first release has been finalised. The intention is to have an enduring arrangement. A summary can be provided at the next meeting.
- Barwon-Darling Water invited NSW DCCEEW to attend its AGM in November/December and provide an update on the procedures manual.

2.3 Barwon-Darling Pump Recalibration Project update (P Hyde, NSW DCCEEW)

- NSW DCCEEW provided an update on the Barwon-Darling Pump Recalibration project including background on the issues, Basin Plan SDL compliance and differences in measurement (time and event vs calibrated meter).
- An overview of the concept and approach, and challenges to phase 1 analysis was presented and discussed. It was found that only 29 Water Access Licences (WALs) with AS4747 compliant meters have statistically robust data.
- The next step is to review the 22/23 data, determine a factor, conduct targeted consultation and seek Ministerial agreement to change. Targeted consultation is likely to take place in early 2025.

- The Ministerial agreement to change is not a change to the metering requirements, it is an agreement to establish a factor to entitlements to more accurately reflect the volume. It won't change the volume of water that is allowed to be pumped. The factor will more likely be valley-wide, not individual.
- Members sought assurance that the timeline will be achieved, acknowledging it is not a simple process, but has been in the works since 2006. NSW DCCEEW advised they are doing their best to get it done and will consult with customers in the valley.

3. CUSTOMER SERVICES:

3.1 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) and IPART submission update.
- WaterNSW clarified that 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.
- 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.
- 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.

3.2 Non-Urban Metering Review update (D Connor, NSW DCCEEW)

- NSW DCCEEW provided an update on the Non-Urban Metering (NUM) 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.
- 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 stated the review has been a good exercise to go through and has resulted in recommendations most irrigators in the Barwon-Darling would support.
- Proposed regulation amendments for floodplain harvesting (FPH) presented and discussed:
 - enabling irrigation to occur during a measurement period by specifying a nominated off-take point
 - remove the additional point of intake DQP validation requirement
 - clarification of the measurement period applying at the water supply work approval scale
 - clarifying when a measurement period starts (remove buffer zone trigger)
 - subdivision of water supply work approval to require controlling infrastructure
 - redefine buffer zone to clarify that buffer zones do not require addition to a water supply work approval
 - remove metering requirement for unintended works consistent with the NUM approach
- Floodplain harvesting status by storage (compliant metering) data presented and discussed. Statistics show a large percentage of irrigators have taken no action to get compliant metering installed. As at 8 October in the Barwon-Darling, 1.2% of primary meters have been installed; 16.7% of primary submitted in the system; and 4.8% survey benchmarks submitted.
- Tailwater returns discussed and an exemption may apply. If the only source of water taken is tailwater through tailwater returns, is it not considered floodplain harvesting. Any additional take is floodplain harvesting.
- Members questioned how this works if customers are floodplain harvesting and get a rain event where there is also tailwater. NSW DCCEEW advised that if there is a declared FPH measurement period, it will all need to be booked against FPH, the two cannot be shandied. The only other option is to switch the event on and off.

4. PRESENTATIONS/CONSULTATION:

4.1 Hydrometric Network and Remote Sensing Program (HNRS) - unlocking the past and future with satellite remote sensing products and tools - (S Rasel, 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.

4.2 Update on 2025 Pricing Proposal (B Maher / 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.

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 DCCEE'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.

5. GENERAL BUSINESS:

- Nil general business raised.

Meeting review and close:

Next meeting: 10 April 2025

Meeting closed: 1.30pm

Barwon-Darling Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 17 October 2024

New actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
BD2410.01	NSW DCCEEW to provide information on how boundaries for WSPs are determined (in relation to intersecting streams).	E Moore (NSW DCCEEW)	

Carried forward actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
BD2407.01	NSW DCCEEW to contact Justin McClure out of session to discuss equity of access in different zones (relating to issue <i>1.06, equity of volume distribution and impacts</i>).	E Moore (NSW DCCEEW)	Complete.
BD2407.02	NSW DCCEEW to contact Barwon-Darling Water to discuss their submission to the Active Management Annual Evaluation and Review 2022-23.	E Moore (NSW DCCEEW)	Complete.
BD2407.03	WaterNSW to share available data of weir pool capacity.	P Saha	Information emailed to members 26/9/24 and included in October 2024 meeting papers. October 2024 discussion: Members stated the data for Brewarrina is not accurate. P Saha and D Kirby to discuss out of session.
BD2407.04	WaterNSW to confirm if the Great Artesian Basin (GAB) groundwater source is included in the new third-party consent procedures.	B Arabin	Complete. The triage applies and the GAB specific rules are applied where it goes for impact assessment. GAB has specific groundwater dependant ecosystems (GDEs) that must be considered, ie. dependant on the proximity of an individual bore to such a GDE, also the impact on aquifer criteria is applicable to flowing and no flowing conditions in the GAB. This is outlined in the WaterNSW FAQ document, located here .