

Coastal-Hunter Customer Advisory Group

Minutes of Meeting

Location: Cliftons, 13/60 Margaret St, SYDNEY

Date: 2 July 2024

Time: 9.30am

Present: David Williams, Molly Walker, Wayne Clarke (online), Melissa Balas (online), Shane Gee (online), Phillip Rudd (online), Ken Bray (online), Geoff Seccombe (online), Chris Rooney (from 1pm).

WaterNSW: Clair Cameron, Brendan Maher (online), Mahmood Khan, Michelle Yeaman (online), Tom Riley, Tessa Hockly and Toni Hayes. Joining for specific agenda items: Andrew George, Jonathan Belej (online), Kate Masters (online), Rooban Roobavannan (online), Rob O'Neill, Michael Martinson (online), Jon Hocking (online), Ben Arabin (online), Martin Brooks, Jack Finch, Sam Stokes (online).

Agency and external staff: Emma Howey (DCCEEW, online), Fiona Court (SEC Newgate), Jackson Streeter (SEC Newgate, online).

Meeting Opened: 9.30am

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

1.1 Acknowledgement of Country:

1.2 **Apologies:** Julia Wokes, David Frith.

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

– Julia Wokes was nominated by David Williams, seconded by Shane Gee. Nil other nominations received.

– Accepted in absentia and carried.

1.6 Minutes of Previous Meeting, 5 March 2024:

– Resolved the minutes of meeting held on [5 March 2024](#) be confirmed as a correct record. Taken as read.

D Williams/S Gee (carried)

1.7 Actions arising from minutes

– Refer to action sheet (attached).

2. OPERATIONS:

2.1 Water Planning and Delivery update (M Khan/R Roobavannan)

– WaterNSW presented a review of operations in the Hunter, North Coast and South Coast valleys, including recent rainfall, current storages status, dam operations, water allocation summary 2023-24, water usage and balance, inflow comparison and rainfall outlook.

– The NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (NSW DCCEEW) issued new water allocation statements on 1 July – [water allocation statements](#).

- Members queried the increased salinity levels in the Hunter, particularly around Sandy Hollow. WaterNSW advised the data is also showing increased levels upstream, which appear to be naturally occurring and consistent over the last 2-3 years. WaterNSW will investigate the cause of the increase and report back to CAG.

Action CVH2407.01: WaterNSW to investigate increased salinity levels in the Hunter and report findings to CAG at the next meeting.

Responsibility: M Khan

- BOM rainfall outlook presented and discussed. If there are some good tributary and dam inflows, there is potential for further extending supplementary access and good chances of storages approaching full supply level (FSL). The BOM's ENSO outlook shifted to La Nina Watch in May 2024.
- Customers and stakeholders can visit WaterNSW's [WaterInsights](#) portal for up to date operational updates and register to the [Early Warning Network](#) (EWN) for flood updates and dam and supply activities.

2.2 Regional Operations update (M Yeaman)

- WaterNSW provided an update on regional operations and maintenance and DCCEE's Hydrometric Network Remote Sensing (HNRS) program.
- Post-tensioning anchor testing (26 of 55 anchors) commences at Glenbawn Dam w/c 1 July (5-yearly activity); resurfacing of roads at Glenbawn and Lostock dams is to commence in September 2024.
- The HNRS program is a collaborative program of four projects funded by the Australian Government to enhance the quality, availability and transparency of water monitoring and information for the Northern Murray-Darling Basin.
- WaterNSW was engaged by NSW DCCEE under the program to deliver 20 new or upgraded sites across the network. Selection of stations done with a technical working group, including WaterNSW staff, to work out where the optimal location for sites would be (utility, accessibility, usability). If the CAG would like more detailed information on any of the projects presented at the next meeting, please provide feedback via toni.hayes@waternsw.com.au

2.3 Regional Valleys Drought Management Approach (B Maher)

- WaterNSW has developed an approach to managing drought in regulated valleys, including development of valley-based Drought Contingency Plans and a drought management and framework plan. Input from CAG members and stakeholders during online workshops May-August 2023 was considered.
- WaterNSW is now better prepared for the next drought, with enhanced understanding of valley-specific issues and contingency options. We will continue to work with customers and relevant agencies in managing water in NSW during drought.
- A more detailed presentation on our drought management plans will be provided at the October/November CAG meeting if members are interested.
- Members stated the River Operations Stakeholder Consultative Committees (ROSCCo) worked well in the Hunter during drought, where communication with water users was frequent and targeted. WaterNSW noted ROSCCOs were specifically set up for drought and we will look at similar forums to ensure customers get the information they need during drought.

3. PRICING ENGAGEMENT:

3.1 Engagement on 2025 Pricing Proposal

- Discussion and actions in this session have been recorded by SEC Newgate (summary attached).
- More information on WaterNSW's 2025-2030 pricing proposal, including Phase 1 and Phase 2 reports, are available on our website at <https://engagement.waturnsw.com.au/WaterNSW-Pricing-Proposal-2025-2030>
- Customers can sign up for IPART updates at <https://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/Home/Reviews/Have-Your-Say>

4. CUSTOMER SERVICES:

4.1 Customer Services update (B Arabin)

- WaterNSW provided an update on recent developments in the Customer Services space, including water order to delivery project review, third party consent for temporary groundwater trades, face-to-face application assistance trial (BLR bores), approval extensions, status of DQP enquiries and telemetry rebate update.
- WaterNSW has finalised the internal review of a water order definition, based on ‘what is a water order’ and how they are managed in practice by customers and WaterNSW. There is no proposed change to rules, however this will provide a consistent definition and understanding for all customers across the State. Draft definition presented and discussed (feedback can be provided to ben.arabin@waternsw.com.au). The water order period is 8am-8am (24-hour period), with releases made from 9am.
- A new third-party consent process for groundwater temporary trades came into effect on 1 July 2024. WaterNSW will provide direction to guide the applicant in identifying third-party bores. Where third-party consent cannot be obtained, applications may be refused, or a reduced volume offered. [FAQs Groundwater temporary trades 71T Dealings \(waternsw.com.au\)](#)
- A face-to-face application assistance trial for BLR bores is live at our Tamworth office to assist customers with poor internet or those not comfortable submitting a digital application. There are plans to extend to other application types and locations if successful.
- Customers are reminded that **all approvals** are issued for a limited time and are required to be extended. Most approvals are issued for 10 years, although some may be for 1, 2 or 3 years depending on purpose and/or conditions (this is not a new fee). The expiry date can be located on the Statement of Approval. It is an offence under the *Water Management Act* to use a work/s on an expired approval. Licence holders are responsible for ensuring their approval is valid (not expired) and their [contact details are up to date](#).
- Members holding multiple licences highlighted that when contact details are updated, they don't always update across all platforms and questioned if databases will be centralised in future to include this. WaterNSW is aware of this issue and is looking at migrating customer data out of the legacy system into a new system in the next 12 months and combining details where name/address etc are the same.
- As requested in March 2024 by some CAGs, WaterNSW now includes customers into relevant communications with DQPs so they get the same information that is going to their DQP. Seventy-three percent of DQP enquiries are resolved within 9 days; 50% of open enquiries are sitting with the DQP for action.
- The Government telemetry rebate, previously available for customers who installed telemetry on their LID, ceased on 30 June 2024. All installs registered in the portal by midnight on 30 June will be honoured.

4.2 Non-Urban Metering Reform update (M Brooks)

- The Non-Urban Metering Reform review commissioned by the Minister in 2023 is near finalisation and it is expected to be made public in the next few weeks. Information provided today is against the current regulations and requirements as of today, where Coastal valleys are required to be compliant by 1 December 2024.
- WaterNSW reminded customers of their obligations under the current regulations to become compliant and advised customers to engage a DQP asap to begin an audit trail. If customers need support, please contact our call centre on 1300 662 077 or visit our website at www.waternsw.com.au/metering to arrange a meeting with our Customer Service Metering Specialist.
- Customers can update their contact details on our website at www.waternsw.com.au/managedetails or contact WaterNSW on 1300 662 077.

- An overview of the [S91i](#) (faulty metering equipment) process was provided. Faulty metering equipment must be reported within 24 hours of becoming aware of an issue. If you apply for an S91i and realise you need to replace your meter, the request for an S91i extension will be referred to NRAR for approval.

4.3 WaterInsights – Current Development Approaches and Feedback – workshop/discussion (T Riley)

- WaterNSW provided an update on the [WaterInsights platform](#), including background and design intent, key functions and relation to real time data (RTD), recent updates, future planning and a roadmap for future development.
- WaterInsights is WaterNSW's interactive online tool that provides information about how water is managed by WaterNSW. The data on WaterInsights is the fastest and most up to date data available.
- WaterNSW is planning for the next pricing determination and sought feedback from members on what is working/not working for them, what information they would like included etc, to ensure customers have access to the information they need.
- Customers can view water availability, allocation, account balances, water quality data, storage volumes, river flows and levels, historical data on dam and stream levels and rules and conditions that govern water management, and more.
- Customers also have the option to register for an account and log in to the platform. While not a requirement, the benefits of logging in are that flow alerts can be set for specific gauges, salinity levels, flows etc. Customers can also register to receive notifications and be alerted via SMS or email.
- Members congratulated WaterNSW on the platform and provided valuable feedback which will be consolidated and considered by the WaterInsights team for future improvements and inclusion on the platform where appropriate. Customers can also provide feedback direct to the WaterInsights teams via the feedback tab on the WaterInsights page.
- Short instructional videos that explain how to use the main features of WaterInsights, including navigation, registering for an account, setting river gauge and water source alerts etc, can be found at the bottom of the [WaterInsights](#) landing page and [WaterInsights - YouTube](#).

Action CVH2407.02: WaterNSW to investigate why alerts aren't working for some customers. W Clark to email specifics for investigation.

Responsibility: W Clark / T Riley

Action CVH2407.03: WaterNSW to share links to WaterInsights tutorial videos with CAG members.

Responsibility: T Hayes

5. PRESENTATIONS/CONSULTATION:

5.1 Coastal Sustainable Extraction Project update (E Howey – NSW DCCEEW)

- NSW DCCEEW provided an update on the Coastal Sustainable Extraction Project as requested by the CAG, including project overview (objectives, drivers, outputs, outcomes), project phases, related workstreams, outcomes from the Coastal Harvestable Rights review, method development, key challenges, and opportunities for customer input (refer to presentation).
- There will be opportunities throughout the project for further stakeholder input.
- Members commended NSW DCCEEW on their presentation at the Tocal Field Days and staff who attended and took on feedback, however disappointed stakeholders won't get to see what is put to the Minister.

5.2 Future CAG Engagement (B Maher)

- As previously discussed with CAGs, WaterNSW is working on a shift in our approach to customer and community engagement to deliver on our strategic priority to be 'respected by the customers and communities we serve'. Feedback was sought from CAG members via a survey in November 2023 and findings and further feedback sought at the March 2024 meeting.
- Changes to the WaterNSW Operating Licence around customer and stakeholder engagement came into effect 1 July 2024, which provides an opportunity for WaterNSW to make positive changes to our

engagement with customers and CAGs to ensure they are getting the information they want when they need it.

- WaterNSW is proposing to move to two face-to-face CAG meetings per year (Sydney/Hunter valley) with the option for an additional online meeting as required and two CAG Chairperson's meetings. Based on your feedback, we propose to implement workshops between WaterNSW staff and customers, present valley-specific information where possible, be clear on the purpose of each agenda item (inform/educate/consult/workshop) and will look to separate other agency items from WaterNSW items.
- Additional customer and community engagement activities such as community drop-in sessions, river runs in the lead up to peak water use periods, attendance at field days, local dam visits and valley tours, online webinars and water user association and industry engagement is also proposed, which will broaden our reach with our customer base. This will be done in conjunction with CAG members.
- WaterNSW is not proposing to split the valleys within this CAG and is open to further feedback and suggestions from CAG members.
- Members agreed with the proposal in principle. Where meetings are held in the Hunter valley, members sought assurance the agenda would not purely focus on Hunter issues.
- Members stated drop-in sessions in each valley would be good to pick up less active users but would need to be well planned and with good reason, noting it is challenging to get other users to attend without access to their contact details.
- Feedback provided by the CAGs will be taken into consideration when developing plans for future engagement.

5.3 e-Water update (M Walker – NSW DCCEEW)

- To be carried over to the next meeting.

6. BUSINESS PAPERS:

- Taken as read.

7. GENERAL BUSINESS:

7.1 Upper Hunter Hydro update (B Maher)

- Upper Hunter Hydro has been in contact with a number of landholders to explain possible project impacts and this is ongoing. The project remains in the very early stages of the development process. The next major step is to conduct site investigations (geological and environmental) to settle the concept design and support the application to commence and EIS (environmental impact statement).
- Members questioned if the project team has been consulting with the Lostock to Glennies Creek Pipeline Project team about the possibility of any overlap when construction commences, stating they should be talking to each other.
- ADDENDUM - WaterNSW advises that the pipeline team has been working on their business case. WaterNSW's government projects team has been working on an information sharing arrangement so that both groups can talk and share information.

Meeting review and close:

Next meeting: 4 December 2024

Meeting closed: 3.45pm

Coastal-Hunter Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 2 July 2024

New actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
CVH2407.01	WaterNSW to investigate increased salinity levels in the Hunter and report findings to CAG at the next meeting.	M Khan	To be presented at the next meeting.
CVH2407.02	WaterNSW to investigate why alerts aren't working for some customers. W Clark to email specifics for investigation.	W Clark/T Riley	Complete.
CVH2407.03	WaterNSW to share links to WaterInsights tutorial videos with CAG members.	T Hayes	Complete. Links emailed to CAG members 4/7/24 and included in July minutes at agenda item 4.3.

Carried forward actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
CVH2403.01	WaterNSW to review opportunities for promoting water user groups via the Customer Newsletter, targeted customer campaigns etc).	B Maher	<p>Complete.</p> <p>It is not possible for WaterNSW to share customer details with Water User Associations (WUAs). WaterNSW values customer privacy and is bound by the principles of the <i>Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998</i> (NSW), which include restrictions on how WaterNSW can use and disclose the personal information of WaterNSW customers.</p> <p>As our customers have not been informed at the time their information was collected that it may be disclosed to Water User Associations, and it would be impracticable for WaterNSW to request consent from its customers to provide their information to WUAs, we are of the view that it would be a breach of our privacy obligations to share customer details with WUAs.</p> <p>WaterNSW is investigating possibility of promoting Water User Associations via our Customer Newsletter and other ways we can help.</p>