

# Greater Sydney Customer Advisory Group

## Minutes of Meeting

**Location:** Cliftons, 13/60 Margaret St, SYDNEY

**Date:** 3 July 2024

**Time:** 9.00am

**Present:** Matt Trapp (Chair), Jenny Zadro, Paul Saad, Peter Griffiths, Gary Wallace, Steve Vella (observer), Sadeq Zaman (observer).

**WaterNSW:** Clair Cameron, Brendan Maher (online), Mahmudul Haque, Mahesh Mandal, Brian Mayhew, Tom Riley, Beth Winchester, Tessa Hockly, Chris Bath (online), Sonia Townsend (online) and Toni Hayes. Joining for specific agenda items: Andrew George, Rob O'Neill (online), Jon Hocking (online), Ben Arabin (online).

**Agency and external staff:** Fiona Court (SEC Newgate), Jackson Streeter (SEC Newgate - online).

**Meeting Opened:** 9.00am

### 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

#### 1.1 Acknowledgement of Country:

**1.2 Apologies:** Brenden Logue, Anthony Muscat, Marina Hollands.

#### 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

- Matthew Trapp was nominated by Gary Wallace, seconded by Paul Saad. Nil other nominations received.
- Accepted and carried.

#### 1.6 Minutes of Previous Meeting, 6 March 2024:

- Resolved the minutes of meeting held on [6 March 2024](#) be confirmed as a correct record. Taken as read.  
Peter Griffiths/Gary Wallace (carried)

#### 1.7 Actions arising from minutes

- Refer to action sheet (attached).

### 2. OPERATIONS:

#### 2.1 Water Planning and Delivery update (M Mandal)

- WaterNSW provided a review of recent operations, including total system storage, overview of rain events, storage status, monthly rainfall totals, inflows, environmental releases, BOM forecast and water quality.
- Between April and June 2024, there were 3 major rain events which caused most of the storages in the system to fill and spill, two of which were managed under the Incident Management Team (IMT) protocols.
- Members queried the triggers to initiate an IMT for flood operations. WaterNSW advised there is a classification system for events and WaterNSW follows the rules in the Flood Manual and IMT protocols.

There is a lot of communication with the BOM and SES, as well as using internal forecast models to create estimate of flows.

- WaterNSW reiterated Warragamba Dam is not a flood mitigation dam (is a water supply dam under state government legislation), so pre-releases can't be made until IMT protocols are triggered. Dependent on inflows and dam level, releases may be made to minimise downstream impacts, however we can't release enough to mitigate flooding. Discussed.
- The trigger to commence Shoalhaven transfers is 75% of total system storage. The earliest expected date for the storage decline to 75% is mid-2025.
- Following lake turnover in April, Lake Oberon is now well mixed with homogeneous water quality through the water column. High dissolved oxygen concentrations are seeing good oxidation of metals. While the lake is well mixed, water quality risks are largely reduced. It is expected the lake behaviour will remain the same for the next couple of months.
- Members stated it is great to see Oberon clean for the first time in a long time and questioned how WaterNSW accounts for natural environmental flows as part of spillage. WaterNSW advised that as Oberon Dam is not gated, the flow rate through spills can't be controlled, so no adjustment is made. However, we do not put extra water on top of the spill flow to create environmental flow unless it is needed. The spill amount balances the shortfall. When the dam is not spilling, we are able to release and maintain flow.

## 2.2 Regional Operations – asset maintenance and projects update (B Mayhew)

- An overview of Sydney regional operations area was presented, including flood operations and operational impact of flood events, an update on the valve replacement works at Warragamba-Prospect pipeline and Oberon Dam renewals.
- WaterNSW has been operating under flood operations for the past few months, which changes our operating environment (increased risk of damage to property and structures, reduced opportunity for maintenance and increased risk of poor water quality). An overview of Warragamba drum gate operation was provided.
- Work is soon to commence at Oberon Dam to replace corroded pipework and valves in the multi-level offtake tower to reduce the risk of failure. The work is complex and requires temporary pipework underwater while replacement is underway. The Project Team will communicate directly with customers of that system. For the most part of the outage there will be normal supply, however may be some limitations of Energy Australia's supply.
- Members stated adequate lead time for communications to affected customers is essential, as well as notification of time for any outages.

**Action GS2407.01:** WaterNSW to ensure Gary Wallace (Oberon Council) and Peter Griffiths (Energy Australia) are included in all communications relating to Oberon Dam renewals.

**Responsibility:** T Hayes

- WaterNSW is continuing to look at ways to reduce operating costs (what we do, how we do it, why we do it that way), including reduced use of contractors and increased self-performed work, better targeted routine maintenance and review of work scopes and task frequency to ensure efficiency.
- The regional operations workforce has increased in order to do business as usual, with additional water monitoring staff to complete work previously done by contractors. Contractors will continue to be used where skills are needed for specific purposes.
- WaterNSW extended an invitation to CAG members to visit our Sydney sites. Dates and locations will be emailed to members in the coming weeks.

**Action GS2407.02:** WaterNSW to arrange dam and site tours for customers to visit and view Greater Sydney assets and circulate to CAG members.

**Responsibility:** B Mayhew/T Hayes

- Members expressed a desire to hold future CAG meetings at Warragamba Dam. WaterNSW is looking at doing this as part of future CAG engagement (refer to agenda item 5.2).

### 3. CUSTOMER SERVICES:

#### 3.1 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](mailto: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 stated many customers are not aware of this process. WaterNSW confirmed this is not a new fee and the process has been around for a long time.
- Members noted there are many elderly customers who are not computer-literate and using the online system is challenging and queried if there is still an option to submit paper-based forms. WaterNSW advised that paper-based forms are not recommended. The best option in this instance is to phone the customer support team on 1300 662 077 and they will guide customers through the process.
- WaterNSW conducted consultation with CAG members at the last meeting for replacement/removal at end-of-life for Government-owned meters in the Hawkesbury-Nepean. Members suggested further consultation with a broader cross-section of customers. WaterNSW is close to finalising ground-truthing of all meters in the valley (88 to follow-up) and a paper is being prepared for the Minister on options to progress, including more extensive engagement with customers.
- Members highlighted that the location of some meters has been incorrect in WaterNSW’s system for some time and questioned if this is holding up the ground-truthing. WaterNSW is aware this is an issue and has engaged Comdain to make an assessment of the meters and collect relevant information (location etc) for the meter title team.
- Members questioned when repairs will commence on flood-damaged meters. WaterNSW advised that it is waiting on a final decision to be made by the Minister as a result of the non-urban metering review. Members asked if the recommendations put to the Minister have been made public. Taken on notice.

**Action GS2407.03:** WaterNSW to confirm with NSW DCCEEW if the recommendations put to the Minister as part of the Non-Urban Metering review are publicly available.

**Responsibility:** T Hayes

- 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 sent 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.

**Action GS2407.04:** WaterNSW to investigate unresolved transaction request raised by Lower Nepean Hawkesbury WUA member (details provided).

**Responsibility:** B Mayhew

#### **4. PRICING ENGAGEMENT:**

##### **4.1 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.watnsw.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>

**Action GS2407.05:** WaterNSW to send the *Water Working Groups Final Report* to Lower Hawkesbury Nepean Water User Group (Jenny Zadro).

**Responsibility:** T Hayes

#### **5. PRESENTATIONS/CONSULTATION:**

##### **5.1 WaterInsights – Current Development Approaches and Feedback – workshop / Q&A (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 provided valuable feedback which will be consolidated and considered by the WaterInsights team for future improvements and inclusion 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](#).

##### **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 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.
- Members are pleased WaterNSW is looking at efficiencies, noting there is a clear difference between information irrigators and Councils require and suggested separating the day into 2 sessions. It is essential for customers to have the opportunity to represent members' issues and relay information to WaterNSW, and noted the CAG is currently the only avenue for this to occur for some groups.
- Members supported the proposal for 2 face-to-face meetings, with the option for a third as required, and would like to hold meetings at Warragamba Dam as geographically is more suitable. Valley and customer specific information is important.
- Members want the opportunity to engage with NSW DCCEEW at CAG meetings and suggested they be a standing invitee to the CAG to ensure concerns are relayed.
- The proposal for WaterNSW to be more visible to the public (field days etc) was welcomed.
- Feedback provided by the CAGs will be taken into consideration when developing plans for future engagement.

## **6. BUSINESS PAPERS:**

- Taken as read.

## **7. GENERAL BUSINESS:**

### **7.1 Water Sharing Plan (WSP) Consultation (P Saad)**

- Members stated that the replacement WSPs for the Greater Metropolitan Region, which came into effect 1 July 2023, was not meant to be finalised without final consultation and engagement with customers. Members raised concerns they will be bound by the new plan, which was not agreed to, for 10 years and questioned if there was an opportunity to get it reversed.
- Concerns were raised at the July 2023 CAG meeting and were noted by NSW DCCEEW staff at that meeting however there has been no further consultation.

**Action GS2407.06:** WaterNSW to contact NSW DCCEEW and request that a team member contact Paul Saad to discuss concerns in relation to Water Sharing Plans.

**Responsibility:** T Hayes

**Meeting review and close:**

**Next meeting:** 5 December 2024

**Meeting closed:** 3.00pm

## Greater Sydney Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 3 July 2024

### New actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
GS2407.01	WaterNSW to ensure Gary Wallace (Oberon Council) and Peter Griffiths (Energy Australia) are included in all communications relating to Oberon Dam renewals.	T Hayes	<b>Complete.</b> Customer details have been passed on to the Project Team for inclusion in communications going forward.
GS2407.02	WaterNSW to arrange dam and site tours for customers to visit and view Greater Sydney assets and circulate to CAG members.	B Mayhew/T Hayes	<b>Complete.</b> Dates circulated to CAG members on 25 July 2024 and a reminder sent on 5 August 2024.
GS2407.03	WaterNSW to confirm with NSW DCCEEW if the recommendations put to the Minister as part of the Non-Urban Metering review are publicly available.	T Hayes	<b>Complete.</b> The recommendations report was released on 29 August 2024. Information on the Non-Urban Metering review can be found on NSW DCCEEW's webpage <a href="#">here</a> .
GS2407.04	WaterNSW to investigate unresolved transaction request raised by Lower Nepean Hawkesbury WUA member (details provided).	B Mayhew	<b>In progress.</b>
GS2407.05	WaterNSW to send the <i>Water Working Groups Final Report</i> to Lower Hawkesbury Nepean Water User Group (Jenny Zadro).	T Hayes	<b>Complete.</b>
GS2407.06	WaterNSW to contact NSW DCCEEW and request that a team member contact Paul Saad to discuss concerns in relation to Water Sharing Plans.	T Hayes	<b>Complete.</b> NSW DCCEEW has advised that flooding interrupted public consultation for the 2023 plan replacement. Further consultation on changes to rules in affected areas will occur by 2028.  For more information on the <a href="#">WSPs for Greater Metropolitan Region</a> refer to NSW DCCEEW's website <a href="#">here</a> .

### Carried forward actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
GS2403.01	Arrange a meeting with FRWS customers (Energy Australia, Oberon Council and Lithgow Council) to discuss WaterNSW's capex programs/projects, with potential for regular meetings.	B Mayhew	<b>Complete.</b>
GS2307.04	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.	J Su	<b>To be reviewed for next determination.</b>