

MINUTES of WATER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting No.4, Friday 30 April 2021
Murray Bridge Office Board Room

Present:

Members: Greg McCarron (Chair), Sheridan Alm, Rosalie Auricht, Anne Jensen, Joanne Pfeiffer, David Zadow, Clem Mason

Board: Di Davidson

Staff: Andrew Meddle, Amy Goodman, Lyz Risby, Bec Freshwater, Courtney Rognli (minutes)

Visitor: Joel Vandeppeer (DEW)

Apologies: Rick Hartman

Welcome

- The Chair welcomed the committee and acknowledged the First Nations people
- Chair thanked all for attendance, explained agenda adjustment.
- Introduced Joel Vandeppeer, Principal Policy Officer, Department for Environment and Water (DEW). Theresa Heneker and Simon Jacobs of DEW were both unable to attend today's meeting, so Joel will be covering their agenda items.

Update from Joel Vandeppeer – Delivery Capacity Issues, Water Allocation Announcements Review, ACCC Report and Water Market project

- Minimum opening water allocations for River Murray entitlement holders were recently announced at 82%, and anticipated to be 100% by mid-June. As a result of recent heavy rains, Menindee Lakes is contributing to shared resource.
- Opening allocations being over 50% means there will be no carry-over available for 2021-2022.
- Water calculator: feedback from the Committee was that many people have missed the release of the water calculator. Suggestions on better promotion include doing a video (from an irrigators perspective); sending text messages to licence holders when there is something to know (similar to SA Power network outages, or CFS emergency alerts); separate the allocation announcements from other information (there was a sense that people might have stopped reading the allocation announcement once it was apparent that allocations would be 100%).
<https://environment.sa.gov.au/topics/river-murray/water-allocation/water-calculator>
- Other feedback indicates more transparency is needed in increased allocation/entitlement from last year to this year. Information provided is not very clear.
- Shortfall response planning: workshops were held, DEW is working through the information and the options; Theresa will come back to a future meeting to discuss this in further detail with the Committee. A key message needs to be that there is no increase in water being extracted from the

system, but its where and how the water is delivered that is changing. SA River Murray irrigators are very concerned about water security – ensuring that the SA entitlements remain high security is the utmost importance and irrigators want reassurance that the state government is continuing to protect the high security status of SA River Murray entitlements

- Water access in the Lower Murray irrigators (the suction fed delivery) is currently an issue. The current level of the pool between Lock 1 and the barrages mean that the pool level is too low to be able to access the water currently. Current feedback is that this has been an issue for a couple of years now, particularly towards the end of the season (March/April). The way that these irrigators can get information about how that pool is being managed could be looked at, either with a contact from the Department, or by being sent updates (communication currently very one sided, irrigators are frustrated).
- ACCC Water Market Inquiry: released 26 March 2021. Very detailed report, it will take time for the state/agency to work through the recommendations and identify actions. One recommendation is the establishment of a water market agency. The establishment of an agency would take a lot of work and time. Many of the other recommendations would flow after the establishment of the agency. Legislative change would also be required for many of the recommendations. Expecting that the Australian Government will release their view of the report's recommendations first, the States cant action them alone. WAC/Irrigators/Industry are keen to stay connected to State Government as the deliberate on how to address the inquiry recommendations.
- Observation that the production aspect of horticulture/irrigation has perhaps dropped away as it is not a priority for PIRSA currently/anymore - DEW has a focus on water availability/security/delivery and environmental water management.

Workshop of water literacy – Lyz Risby and Bec Freshwater (MRLB)

- Minister has asked for education for irrigators, as well as wider community, so brainstorming session was held for what/where/how.
- Complexity of the WAPs deters people from engaging/understanding water allocation policy.
- There is already lots/too much information available - but people are not engaging with this approach.
- People learn best when there is two way conversation - this is a more resource intensive way of delivering the outcome. Scheduled community engagement, info and education sessions are not necessarily the most effective action. Ad hoc sessions, discussions have been found to be quite effective and informative.
- Create a network of people who deliver the concise messages out with different groups. The Board's role could be to facilitate the network and make sure that the communicators understand the messages - then the people go out and about and bring the messages back to the Board.
- Google translator could be used to translate some of our documentation into different languages.
- Run sessions for water brokers - does anyone else (ie DEW/CEWH/MDBA) approach water brokers?
- Need to use a term other than water literacy - water literacy can be interpreted as people are already illiterate and it also implies that if you understood more the problems in the basin would disappear.
- Building on the education program - using the school kids to educate the parents?

What are the unique things for the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board?

- Water allocation plans
- Linking the farm to floodplain projects - farmers and environmental groups working together
- Our education program - and this could be a unique delivery mechanism - we could make a better connection to the high school agriculture programs
- Investment of levy and the leveraging opportunities that brings
- Could link River Murray irrigators to other water resources in the SA (Marne/Saunders, Mallee for example)

Members Updates:

- Clem Mason - attended a presentation from Richard Beasley, author of Dead in the Water. From this Clem is voicing his concerns that the larger policy framework of the Murray-Darling basin will not deliver a sustainable river system. We are taking too much water from the system and allowing development decisions that are driven purely by economics and investment, and are not considering the sustainability of existing communities and the river system. The Coorong is dying and no one is caring.
- Anne Jenson:
 - Advice to the Board is that policy decisions, including water trading, must take into account third party impacts such as deliverability, impacts on communities and should be holistic. A flaw in the national water initiatives
- Joanne Pfeiffer - Can the Board ask the Minister why the BCC only has 1 SA rep - Emily Jenke has recently resigned.

Action: Di to invite the Minister to the next water advisory committee meeting

Action: Greg to circulate the document prepared by Anne Jensen following the March 12th meeting

Action: Need to add to the minutes of the March meeting that there was discussion about the Committee wanting to know from the Board how to provide advice through to them, we also need to add what was discussed when we visited Clark's sandbar.

Close



Greg McCarron
Chair

Water Advisory Committee

No.	Action	Due Date	Status
1	Simon Jacobs to come to a future meeting to provide an update/seek feedback on the plan – for June meeting	June meeting	In-hand
2	Committee to seek an additional member who is knowledgeable about Mallee water	ASAP	On-going
3	Lyz to investigate whether First Nations are willing to provide the Committee with a copy of their Water Plan		In-hand
4	Deana to provide information on what process is followed when certain catchments/states do not meet legislative requirements		On-going (?)
5	Di to invite the Minister to the next Water Advisory Committee meeting	June meeting	In-hand
6	Greg to circulate the document prepared by Anne Jensen following the 12 March meeting		Completed
7	Need to add to the minutes of the March meeting that there was a discussion about the Committee wanting to know from the Board how to provide advice through to them. Also need to add what was discussed when visited Clark's sandbar.	Amy Goodman	Completed