

**MINUTES of WATER ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Meeting No.2, Tuesday 09 February 2021**  
**Murray Bridge Office Board Room**

**Present:**

**Members:** Sheridan Alm, Rosalie Auricht, Anne Jensen, Greg McCarron, Joanne Pfeiffer,  
David Zadow, Clem Mason, Rick Hartman

**Board:** Di Davidson

**Staff:** Andrew Meddle, Amy Goodman, Lyz Risby and Samantha Wakelin (minutes)

**Visitor:** Dan Jordan (Director Policy and Planning DEW), Deana Mildren (MDBA), Theresa Heneker (Principal Policy Officer DEW), Simon Jacobs (Senior Policy Officer DEW), Nicole Glen (EA to Dan Jordan)

**Apologies:** Michelle Campbell (CEWH)

**Welcome**

- The Chair welcomed the committee and acknowledged the First Nations people
- The Chair advised that there would be some minor agenda changes:
  - The Delivery capacity issues item would take place first
  - The State water policy item would take place second
  - Michelle Campbell was an apology. As a result, the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder item was removed from the agenda
- The Presiding Member for the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board welcomed the committee and thanked them for coming together in person. The Presiding Member expressed that the committee members may bring any ideas/concerns to the committee for discussion.
- The Chair and the Presiding Member emphasised that urgent matters may be addressed via phone or e-mail and need not wait until the next scheduled committee meeting

**Delivery Capacity Issues - Theresa Heneker - DEW**

- Theresa provided a presentation on River Murray Delivery and Shortfall Risk – see Attachment 1
- Delivery shortfall (actual use is greater than forecast use when water was released from storages over a period) is a separate issue to Supply shortfall (system is unable to supply all downstream requirements over a water year)
- The Department for Environment and Water is working to develop, both jointly with other basin partners and within SA, a response that aims to minimise that risk but if required, manages how this risk impacts individual water users. This response would consider the impact of climate change on future risk.
- South Australia believes that it has a range of options that can be implemented to manage shortfalls before there would be any impact on individual water users.
- The Committee were asked to provide feedback on the delivery risks paper and shortfall planning

- Matters raised by the Committee included
  - Concern that the identified risks have been beyond individual water users' control and impacted by government policy.
  - Who would determine what is considered a cost effective and community supported mitigation strategy?
  - Any policy needs to be in line with what can actually be delivered.
  - As state governments and the Commonwealth work together to manage the River Murray, many things would have to be agreed to by all four governments before they can be implemented.
  - If any restriction was to be placed on water users, the water needs of different crops and the critical times for watering should be taken into account. A levy based on the amount of crops a landholder reports would discourage them from overestimating their crops in order to obtain a larger allocation of water. Restricting water extraction should be flexible to allow growers to decide how they use the reduced volume over a fixed period. Compliance with any restrictions could be monitored through the use of telemetry or the manual reading of water meters by Government employees.
  - The amount of water each irrigator can pump within a certain time period varies a great deal, therefore designated times when users may pump may not be viable
  - The community response to limited water use over 7 days would most likely be negative.
  - Reduced levy costs could be provided for those properties which decide not to use water when there is a shortfall
- The aim of any policy is to leave control of water use to the irrigator so they can manage their business, balanced with ensuring everyone has access to their allocation.
- The Committee expressed that any policy developed must provide irrigators with certainty about what would happen if a shortfall event occurred, and that irrigators need to be given as much notice as reasonably practical.

**ACTION: Committee to provide feedback/ideas on shortfall management to Theresa Heneker and the Water Advisory Committee for discussion**

#### **State Water Policy – Dan Jordan - DEW**

- Dan provided a presentation on State Water Policy - see Attachment 2
- The Committee expressed that improved communication of water policy to the public is vital, including assisting water users to understand:
  - The options available within water markets, other than their allocation
  - Basin Plan outcomes
  - Interstate Carryover and the third party impacts
  - Misinformation. Identify and respond to misinformation, including complaints being made against South Australia's figures, water use and efficiency projects.
- The Committee identified the need for a response to statements made by other states/organisations to clearly establish SA's position

**ACTION: Dan to attend a future meeting to discuss specific issues as identified by the Committee**



### **Water Allocation Announcements Review – Simon Jacobs - DEW**

- Simon provided a presentation on the SA River Murray Water Allocation Announcement Process Review – see Attachment 3
  - The Committee expressed that there was positive feedback from people involved in the planning process. They felt that the process was inclusive and the language was very straightforward. No wholesale changes were requested.
  - The Committee emphasised the importance of consistent messaging and helping community figureheads to understand and support processes.
  - The public consider environmental irrigators and other irrigators to be separate entities; however they are functioning under the same rules. The Committee would like this to be communicated better to prevent us vs them mentalities and encourage cooperation.

**ACTION: Simon Jacobs to come to a future meeting to provide an update/seek feedback on the plan**

### **Regional Water Resources – Lyz Risby - MRLB**

- Lyz presented an overview on Water Planning in the SA MDB region – see Attachment 4
  - The WAP within the region are River Murray, Mallee Wells, Marne Saunders, & Peak Roby Sherlock.
  - The Mallee Prescribed Wells Area has an aquifer which is slowly being depleted (over 300 years **15% of the water extracted would not be replenished**), much of the water is high in salinity but is suitable for stock and tolerant crops
  - An Aboriginal Waterways assessment is conducted when Water Allocation Plans are reviewed

**ACTION: Committee to seek an additional member who is knowledgeable about Mallee water**

**ACTION: Lyz to investigate whether First Nations are willing to provide the Committee with a copy of their Water Plan**

**ACTION: Lyz to provide updates at future meetings as WAP progresses**

### **MDBA - Deana Mildren – MDBA Engagement Team**

- Deana provided a presentation on MDBA activity, including the Basin Plan – see Attachment 5
  - The MDBA are holding Delivery Capacity Issue workshops on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February in Renmark and Friday 26<sup>th</sup> February in Murray Bridge

**ACTION: Committee to speak to Chair regarding what they would like to hear from the MDBA or bring to their attention.**

**ACTION: Deana to provide information on what process is followed when certain catchments/states do not meet legislative requirements**

**ACTION: Deana to provide details of the upcoming MDBA engagement session to Committee**

### **Committee operations, conflict of interest and confidentiality**

- The Chair emphasised that there will be elements of the Water Advisory Committee meetings which will be confidential

- The Chair asked that if anything were to arise which presented a conflict of interest for a Committee member, they are to notify the Chair and have a discussion about how to handle the matter. The conflict of interest will be recorded.
- The Committee is not a decision making body and will only provide recommendations to other bodies.

**ACTION: Speakers to be asked to clearly state if any part of their presentation is confidential, prior to presenting**

**ACTION: Committee members to report any conflict of interest to the Chair**

**Forward meeting schedule and agenda items**

- The Committee members were informed that urgent items may be discussed via phone or e-mail rather than waiting for a formal meeting

**ACTION: Samantha Wakelin and Amy Goodman to determine members' availability for monthly meetings**

**ACTION: Committee members to provide suggestions for agenda items to the Chair**

Close



.....  
**Greg McCarron**

**Chair**

**Water Advisory Committee**