

# MCCC AGENDA

## Meeting no. 192

10.00am, Tuesday 24 May 2022  
SRW, Maffra

*We acknowledge the Gunaikurnai people, Traditional Owners of this land on which we meet and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present.*



**Southern  
Rural Water**

Managing Water. Serving Communities.



## Our Vision

Great value for customers and community through excellence in rural water management

### Trademark Behaviours

- Always Safe
- United
- Ambitious
- Results Driven
- Customer First
- Innovative
- Respectful

1		PROGRAM	PRESENTER	TIME
		OPENING	CHAIR	
2		Welcome and apologies	CHAIR	
3		Declaration of conflicts of interest	CHAIR	
4		Confirmation of minutes	CHAIR	10.05am
5		Business arising from previous meetings	CHAIR	
		<u>FOR DISCUSSION</u>		
6		PRINCIPAL MATTERS		
	6.1	Chairperson's report	CHAIR	10.10am
	6.2	Significant issues or actions	CHAIR	
	6.3	Matters referred by the Board	BOARD MEMBER	10.15am
	6.4	Manager Water Supply update	MANAGER WATER SUPPLY	10.20am
	6.5	Glenmaggie Release Strategy	FOR NOTING	10.30am
	6.6	Modernisation update	MANAGER WATER SUPPLY	10.40am
	6.7	Macalister demand study preliminary findings	FOR NOTING	10.50am
	6.8	MCCC Workshop – Water Market Transparency Project	MANAGER WATER SUPPLY	11.00am
	6.9	Pricing Submission observations	MANAGER WATER SUPPLY	11.10am
7		FOR NOTING	CHAIR	
	7.1	Correspondence		
	7.2	Communications update		
	7.3	Feedback register		
8		GENERAL BUSINESS	ALL	11.25am
9		Next meeting		
10		Close		

2. **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES; AGENDA LISTING**

3. **DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

4. **CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the committee **approves** the minutes of the meeting held on **Tuesday 26 April 2022**.

**REPORT**

Draft minutes of the MCCC meeting held on Tuesday 26 April 2022, are included at 4.1.

## 4.1 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES, MEETING 191

### MACALISTER CUSTOMER CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

#### MINUTES OF MEETING 191

Held 10.00am Tuesday 26 April 2022

#### SRW, Maffra

#### PRESENT

Mrs Raelene Hanratty, Chair  
Mr Benn Thexton, Deputy Chair  
Mr Norm Drew  
Ms Kate Lamb  
Mr Alan Clyne  
Mr Graeme Anderson, OAM

#### SRW Representatives

Mr Cameron FitzGerald, Managing Director  
Mr Hugh Christie, General Manager Service Delivery  
Mr Simon Wilkinson, Manager Water Supply  
Mr Craig Smith, Manager Strategy and Business Planning  
Mrs Pamela Crawford, Customer Relations Officer

#### APOLOGIES

Mrs Jeannette Howie  
Mr Brad White  
Mr Malcolm Sellen  
Ms Joanne Butterworth-Gray, SRW Board Chair

## 5. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES; AGENDA LISTING

The Chair opened the meeting by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land and waters of the MID.

The chair informed the Committee that both Malcolm Sellen and Robert Webber have resigned from the Committee. The Chair thanked both members for their contribution.

## 6. DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interest were declared.

Recommendation to have a register attached to the agenda with members interests listed which can be referred to throughout the meeting.

**Action – Mrs Crawford to co-ordinate the creation of a Conflict of Interest table for the agenda.**

## 7. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on **Tuesday 22 February 2022**.

**Moved:** Mr A Clyne     **Seconded:** Mrs K Lamb

**5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

Meeting	Agenda Item #	Action	Action Officer	Status
Sept	7.5	<i>SRW to work with Mr Clyne in the development of a workshop.</i>	<i>Wilkinson/Crawford/Clyne</i>	<i>Complete</i>
Oct	6.3	<i>The MCCC chair to develop a letter to be sent to the Minister, with Committee input, regarding Board appointments.</i>	<i>Hanratty</i>	<i>Complete</i>
Feb	6.4	<i>A copy of the allocation presentation will be circulated to the committee along with the meeting documents.</i>	<i>Crawford</i>	<i>Complete</i>

**6. PRINCIPAL MATTERS**

**6.1 CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT**

- The Chair provided a report that included:
  - The development of the new SRW website and her involvement in the working group.
  - A letter to The Honourable Lisa Neville MP that was developed and sent to DELWP. A copy was attached to the agenda papers.
    - Mrs Hanratty discussed the complexity of where to direct the letter given the multiple levels of structure in DELWP.
  - Mrs Hanratty also recently toured Mr Drew’s farm which was insightful to see how operations work in different parts of the Macalister Irrigation Area.

**6.2 SIGNIFICANT ISSUES OR ACTIONS**

- There are no significant current issues or actions.

**6.3 MATTERS REFERRED BY THE BOARD**

- Mr FitzGerald informed the Committee that Ms Butterworth-Gray was an apology for the current meeting and the May meeting due to pre-existing commitments before taking her role at SRW. The MCCC requested that consideration be given to the potential of an alternate Board representative coming to the MCCC meeting if the nominated attendee was not available.
- Mr FitzGerald reported that the Pricing Submission is the core matter for the Board presently, together with the current Enterprise Agreement discussions with SRW staff.
- The Committee received an update on the progress of awarding the Newry-Nuntin Phase 2 works. Negotiations with the preferred contractor are continuing with a focus being an agreement on pricing of pipe materials which is being impacted by the availability and price of raw materials overseas.
- SRW has communicated with Newry and Nuntin customers that current irrigation infrastructure will remain in place to provide water into the next irrigation season.

#### **6.4 MANAGER WATER SUPPLY UPDATE**

- Mr Simon Wilkinson, Manager Water Supply led discussions, including:
  - Glenmaggie release strategy
    - The storage level has been dropped the sill level for flood mitigation purposes and in recognition that it is forecast to be a wet winter/spring period.
    - The Committee queried who is consulted and what information is used when making these decisions. Mr Wilkinson responded saying that SRW uses best available data from the BOM and internal data sets. SRW consults both internal Headworks engineers and external stakeholders including the CMA.
    - It was also queried why doesn't the community know how much water has gone down the river and out to sea. This was seen as a good opportunity for community education. Mr Wilkinson agreed to follow up and ascertain the volume of water.
  - Water trading and utilisation project
    - A workshop will be held on 17<sup>th</sup> May.

#### **6.5 WINTER WORKS PROGRAM**

- The Winter Works Program paper was noted by the Committee.

#### **6.6 FEBRUARY MCCC WORKSHOP WRAP UP**

- The Committee were invited to share their feedback and insights from the February workshop.
- Mr Wilkinson advised that discussion papers from the workshop will be developed into a publication that can be used for MCCC member induction as well as distribution to a broader base. The MCCC will be able to review the document before circulation.
- The Committee provided the following workshop feedback:
  - Ms Lamb – said it was great to share knowledge and listen to developments. There was a lot of emotion in the room, a beautiful day to be a part of.
  - Mr Thexton – said the session was good to get a look at the future needs. The history aspect is good for a benchmark but nothing to do with future.
  - Mr Drew stated that the MIA is “one regulated district” and it is important that this is recognised by the MCCC.
    - SRW acknowledged the MIA is one regulated system and all customers include both those connected to the irrigation channel system and those who receive water via regulation of the Macalister and Thomson rivers, will be treated equally.
    - It was commented that we can learn from the past, but we can't change it. The documents from the workshop will be pulled together as a succinct pack and circulated to the Committee before being published.
    - Mr Drew requested a definition, including a map, of the Thomson Macalister system. The whole system as one. It was agreed that this would be included in the summary pack.
  - My Clyne said it was a very successful workshop that is going to set us up for the next couple of decades at least. Should have a review clause on the document produced for every 5 years.
  - Mr Anderson – Interested to see finalised documents. Was a great, well-run workshop.

- Mrs Hanratty said the workshop was informative and got a lot out of it. Thought some things weren't in the reading material but upon re-reading the papers, they were found to be there.
  - Mr FitzGerald said he got a lot out of the workshop the purpose of which was to draw a line in the sand on where we have been and set ourselves up for the future. Mr FitzGerald also acknowledged Mr Wilkinson's efforts in organising the workshop.
  - Mr Christie echoed Mr FitzGerald's acknowledgement of Mr Wilkinson's efforts and said there was value in the session for the organisation as a whole as it provided a common understanding between the committee and staff.
  - It was also commented that we need to move forward and attract people to the Committee. This provides a platform for renewal of the committee.
- **ACTION - Mr Wilkinson to include a definition and map of the Thomson Macalister system in the MCCC workshop pack.**

### **6.7 PRICING SUBMISSION**

- Mr Craig Smith, Manager Strategy and Business Planning joined the meeting to discuss the Pricing submission and to gauge committee members feedback on the information which will be presented to the broader customer base.
  - Mr Smith spoke to the presentation which covered pricing, engagement and consultation.
  - The recent survey conducted provided some good background information on the key issues customers want SRW to consider.
  - The Committee were presented with proposed pricing pathways that were informed by key inputs including:
    - The 25 year capital plan and financial model
    - Collated feedback from recent customer engagements and stakeholder discussions
    - Future regulatory requirements, compliance activities and initiatives
    - Outcomes from the SRW Board strategy workshop
- The Committee discussed the presentation and proposed pricing that will form the next phase of engagement with customers. The highlights from the discussion included:
  - A need to be clear on the list of proposed Capex projects for each option.
  - Impact on accounts could be shown in a different slide.
  - Concern that customers may not understand information and to be clear and concise with information.
  - Further need to take into consideration risk.
  - The impact with and without CPI isn't substantial.
  - The impact auction vs distribution of water savings from modernisation has on prices
  - Consideration on the impact changes of industry type will have on how much water is used.
  - Need to find a balance with options. Perhaps SRW will need to consider a blend of the options presented.
- There was discussion about the importance of making a decision on whether to allocate water savings across the customer base or to undertake auctions. There were mixed views on the matter:



- There was some support for allocations of water savings on the basis that this puts more water in the hands of farmers without need for upfront capital investment.
- An alternative position was presented that auction puts water where it is needed and avoids the risk of people “sitting on” unused water.
- There was also a discussion about whether all irrigators needed additional water, with individuals expressing a range of positions from needing water, to having adequate water and preferring to minimise upward pressure on fees and charges.

SRW members present highlighted that auctions are preferred by the Minister for Water, but that all customer feedback would be considered as a part of the development of the price submission. Mr FitzGerald stated categorically that if an allocation was to occur then all customers in the Macalister Irrigation Area would be able to participate. To avoid doubt, all customers include both those connected to the irrigation channel system and those who receive water via regulation of the Macalister and Thomson rivers.

- The Committee were informed of drop-in information sessions which will take place in May 2022 for the boarder customer base. Mr Smith agreed to forward the information session date and time to the Committee.

## **7.0 FOR NOTING**

### **7.1 CORRESPONDENCE**

- The Committee noted the letter to The Honourable Lisa Neville MP, from the MCCC.

### **7.2 FEEDBACK REGISTER (RELEVANT TO MID)**

- The Committee noted that there was no feedback relevant to the MID since the last meeting.

### **7.3 COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**

- The Committee noted that there was no Communications report.

## **8.0 GENERAL BUSINESS**

- In camera sessions
  - The Committee discussed the potential use of “in camera” sessions with those members present agreeing they did not think the Committee required them.
  - It was suggested that if the occasion arose the Committee could request it and SRW Management supported this. It was agreed that it would be used on an “as needed” basis.
- Mr FitzGerald took the following questions on notice and will report back at the next Committee meeting:
  - Superannuation on sitting fees.

- Use of bollards at Cowwarr weir and concern they will cause debris build up in the next flood. Mr FitzGerald agreed to discuss with SRW Engineers.

#### **9.0 NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting No. 192 of the Macalister Customer Consultative Committee is scheduled for 10.00 am on Tuesday 24 May 2022.

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
MCCC 192	Tuesday, 24 <sup>th</sup> May 2022
MCCC 193	Tuesday, 26 <sup>th</sup> July 2022
MCCC 194	Tuesday, 27 <sup>th</sup> September 2022
MCCC 195	Tuesday, 25 <sup>th</sup> October 2022
MCCC 196	Tuesday, 13 <sup>th</sup> December 2022

#### **10.0 MEETING CLOSE**

With there being no further business, the meeting closed at 12.37pm.

	July 2021	Sept 2021	Oct 2021	Dec 2021	Feb 2022	April 2022	May 2022	July 2022	Sept 2022	Oct 2022	Dec 2022
Raelene Hanratty	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Graeme Anderson	✓	✓	✓	✓	Apol	✓					
Stephen Dwyer	✓	✓	✓	✓	Apol						
Jeanette Howie	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Apol					
Norm Drew	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Malcolm Sellen	Apol	✓	✓	✓	Apol	Apol					
Alan Clyne	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Robert Webber	✓	✓	✓	Apol	Apol	N/A					
Kate Lamb	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Brad White	Apol	✓	✓	✓	✓	Apol					
Benn Thexton	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					

- ✓ Attended Meeting
- Apol Notification of apology
- Blank Did not attend

## **5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

Meeting	Agenda Item #	Action	Action Officer	Status
April	6	Mrs Crawford to co-ordinate the creation of a Conflict of Interest table for the agenda.	Crawford	In progress
April	6.6	Mr Wilkinson to include a definition and map of the Thomson Macalister system in the MCCC workshop pack.	Wilkinson	In progress

## **6. PRINCIPAL MATTERS**

### **6.1 CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

- The Chair will provide a report.

### **6.2 SIGNIFICANT ISSUES OR ACTIONS**

- There are no significant current issues or actions.

### **6.3 MATTERS REFERRED BY THE BOARD**

- The Board member present will update the Committee.

### **6.4 MANAGER WATER SUPPLY UPDATE**

- Mr Simon Wilkinson, Manager Water Supply provide an update.

### **6.5 GLENMAGGIE RELEASE STRATEGY**

- A paper is included with the agenda for noting.

### **6.6 MODERNISATION UPDATE**

- Mr Simon Wilkinson, Manager Water Supply, will lead discussions.

### **6.7 MACALISTER DEMAND STUDY PRELIMINARY FINDINGS**

- A paper is included with the agenda for noting.

### **6.8 MCCC WORKSHOP – WATER MARKET TRANSPARENCY PROJECT**

- A paper is included with the agenda for noting.

### **6.9 PRICING SUBMISSION OBSERVATIONS**

- Mr Simon Wilkinson, Manager Water Supply will lead discussions.

## **7.0 FOR NOTING**

### **7.1 CORRESPONDENCE**

- Letter from The Honourable Lisa Neville MP, from the MCCC.

### **7.2 FEEDBACK REGISTER (RELEVANT TO MID)**

- Nil since last meeting.

### **7.3 COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**

- The Communications report is included with the agenda for noting.

## **8.0 GENERAL BUSINESS**

- The Chair will refer to the conflict of interest table and go around the table inviting members to declare other interests.
  - Review of Conflict of Interest table wording – Norm Drew

## **9.0 NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting No. 193 of the Macalister Customer Consultative Committee is scheduled for 10.00 am on Tuesday 26 July 2022.

Topics to be discussed include:

- Chairpersons report
- Customer Satisfaction Survey (subject to consultant completion)
- Manager Water Supply Update
- Modernisation update
- Salinity program update

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
MCCC 193	Tuesday, 26 <sup>th</sup> July 2022
MCCC 194	Tuesday, 27 <sup>th</sup> September 2022
MCCC 195	Tuesday, 25 <sup>th</sup> October 2022
MCCC 196	Tuesday, 13 <sup>th</sup> December 2022

## **10.0 MEETING CLOSE**

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST TABLE**

<b>Name of Committee member</b>	<b>Description of interest</b>	<b>Interested parties</b>	<b>Is the interest current?</b>
Kate Lamb	Beef grazing operation in Denison	Kate Lamb	Yes

Item No: **6.5**

Subject: **Strategy for managing releases from Lake Glenmaggie**

Action: **For noting**

Author: **Edward Smith, Manager Headworks Operations**

Responsible executive: **Scott Cornish, General Manager Asset Futures**

Date: **17/05/2022**

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## **PURPOSE**

1. To inform the committee of the current water level in Lake Glenmaggie and the strategy for releases over the winter and spring.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the committee notes the paper

## **PREVIOUS COMMITTEE CONSIDERATIONS**

2. None

## **BACKGROUND**

3. Unseasonably wet conditions have continued throughout much of the irrigation season. In March, significant inflows were occurring into Lake Glenmaggie that would have seen the reservoir fill and spill in April.
4. Having a full reservoir going into winter is a rare occurrence and means that little flood mitigation can be provided to the downstream community.

## **REPORT**

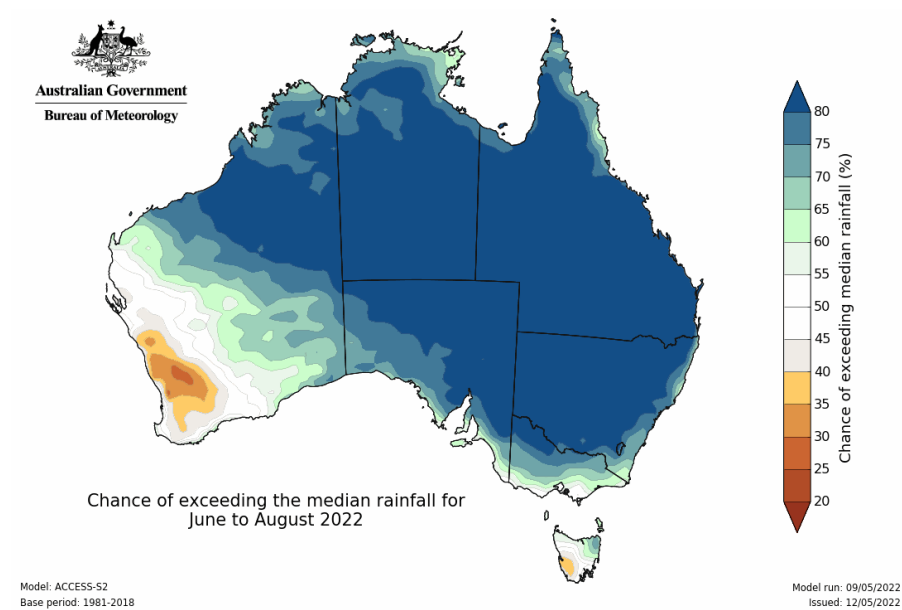
### **Lowering Lake Glenmaggie**

5. Given the very high storage level, a decision was taken in March to lower the reservoir to the spillway sill. This decision was made for two reasons; to ensure that critical maintenance on the flood gates could be carried out; and to provide some capacity for flood mitigation going into winter.
6. The spillway sill sits at 119,000ML which is approximately twice the average storage level for this time of year.
7. The water level reached the spillway sill on the 27<sup>th</sup> April and is currently being held at 110,000ML whilst maintenance work is carried out. The maintenance schedule will be completed by the 28<sup>th</sup> May after which the water level will be allowed to increase back to the spillway sill.

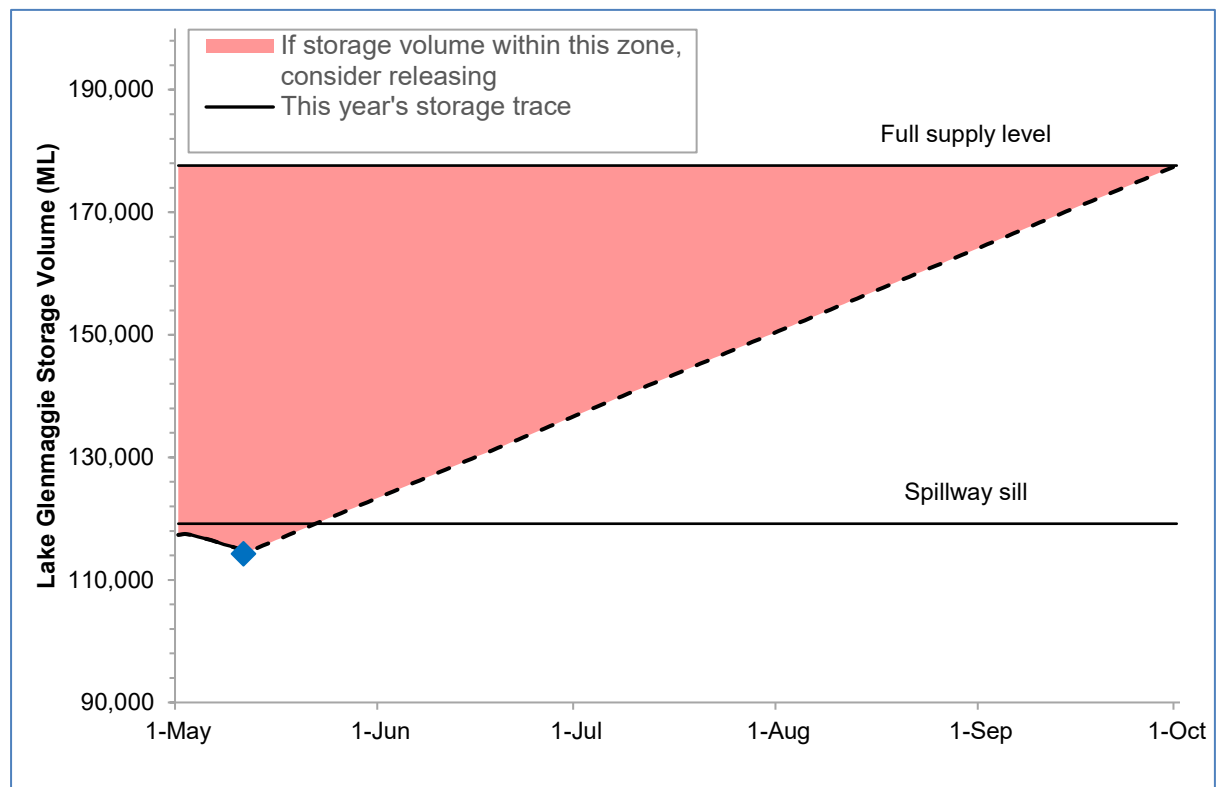
### **Filling strategy**

8. Whilst the La Nina event is expected to cease in early winter, the Bureau of Meteorology's (BoM) seasonal forecast for the June to August period is for wetter than

average conditions, with a 55 to 65% probability of exceeding median rainfall in the catchment.



9. Given this wet outlook and with water levels already high, the initial target fill date for Lake Glenmaggie is the 1<sup>st</sup> October. If the outlook and actual conditions become drier over the coming months, then the target fill date will be brought forward to the 15<sup>th</sup> September, or even the 1<sup>st</sup> September.
10. From the start of June the storage level will begin to be raised, approximately following the inflow trace below.



11. This strategy will now be reviewed every two weeks so that it can be amended to suit any changes in conditions or in the seasonal rainfall outlook.



12. As the water level approaches the full supply level, additional releases may be required to respond to forecast rainfall and modelled inflows to the reservoir, in order to minimise flooding impacts downstream.

13. **Budget impact:** Nil

14. **Link to strategy:** This strategy aims to maximise Customer Value and Community Value.

15. **Risk:** There is a very high degree of confidence that the reservoir will fill by the target date.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

16. An update will be provided to the committee in July.

Item No: **6.7**  
Subject: **Macalister demand study preliminary findings**  
Action: **For noting**  
Author: **Penny Winbanks, Manager Strategic Partnerships & Policy**  
Date: **19/05/2022**

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## **PURPOSE**

1. To provide the MCCC with the preliminary findings from a recent survey to determine demand for additional water in the Macalister Irrigation Area.

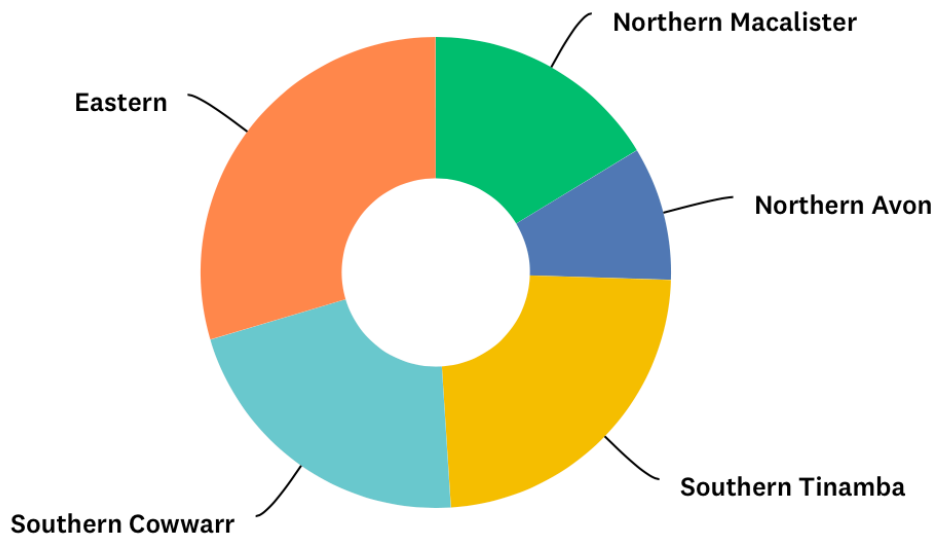
**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Committee notes the report and the preliminary results of the survey.

## **BACKGROUND**

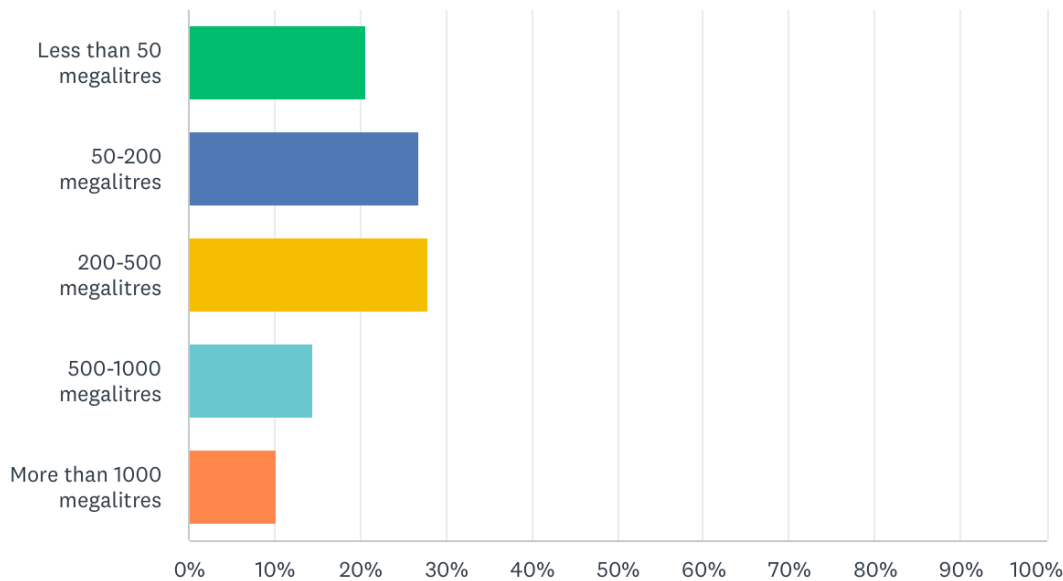
2. SRW are currently undertaking a study to determine the value potential of developing irrigation further in Central and West Gippsland to inform current and future decisions.
3. It was identified that understanding the demand for additional water within the Macalister Irrigation Area was important to these decisions, and to that end a survey to collect real data was included in the scope of works. SRW appointed RMCG to undertake this study.

## **DISCUSSION**

4. SRW released a survey to all customers within the Macalister Irrigation Area in April 2022. Customers were informed of the survey via mobile phone and social media, and it was also promoted directly via phone calls.
5. 108 surveys were completed of which 20 have been followed up for more in-depth discussions.
6. Nearly half the respondents were dairy enterprises, followed by beef enterprises at 30%. Vegetables growers made up about 2%. (Noting that some larger vegetable growers have been identified to follow up for direct discussions)
7. The following pie chart shows the spread of respondents by area.



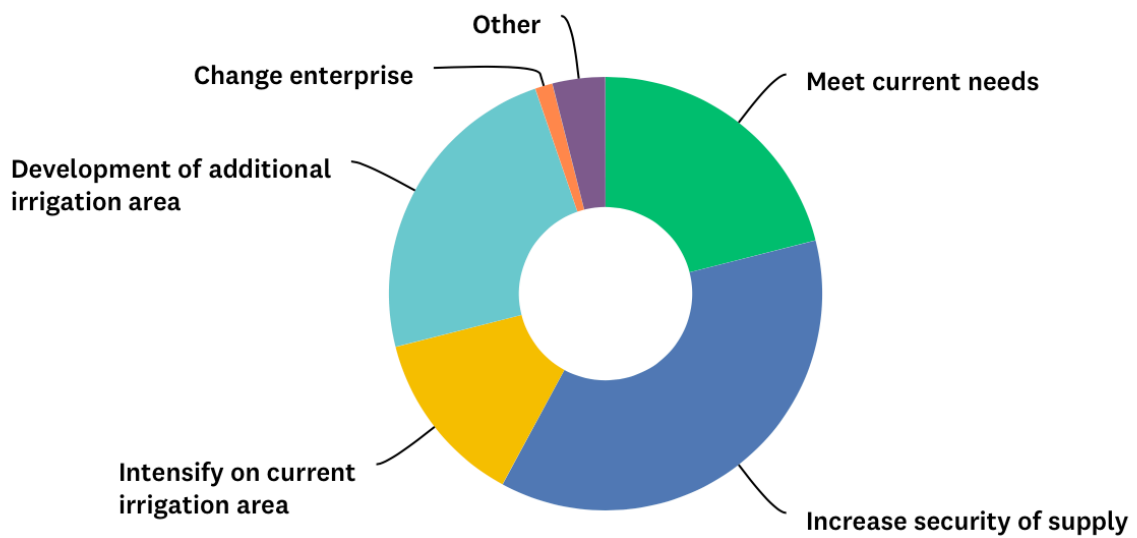
- While some respondents indicated that they supplement supply through groundwater, unregulated river water or farm dams, that majority (85%) named regulated MID supply as their primary source.
- The current volume of water available on the properties of respondents is shown below



- In terms of expansion, diversification and upgrading systems; 41% are seeking to, or are currently expanding their business, one third have plans to diversify, two-thirds are considering or have direct plans to purchase additional land in the next 5-10 years and 77% of respondents have plans to upgrade their irrigation systems in the near future.
- Nearly 80% are interested in accessing additional water, and half of those respondents are seeking 50ML - 200ML. A rough, preliminary estimate suggest this could be in the order of 11GL of total demand.

12. Of the respondents interested in additional water 86 % are happy to pay market rates (so long as rates are affordable and/or savings are returned to irrigators)

13. Reasons for requiring additional water are shown below



## NEXT STEPS

14. The project is due to be finalised by the end of June.

Item No: **6.8**  
Subject: **MCCC Workshop – Water Market Transparency Project**  
Action: **For noting**  
Author: **Marissa Gwydir**  
Date: **19/05/2022**

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## **PURPOSE**

- To provide an update to the MCCC on the key discussion points from the Water Market Transparency workshop

**To inform the committee of the discussion points during the workshop which will inform the project outcomes.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Water Market Transparency Project aims to assess and understand the current barriers to water trading within the Thomson / Macalister Irrigation Area. In particular, the primary area of focus will be to identify what support is required to encourage increased trading and assess the benefits surrounding the introduction of a water trading platform.

## **SUMMARY**

A workshop was held on Tuesday 17 May 2022, attended by five Committee members, two Southern Rural Water representatives and two facilitators from RM Consulting Group (RMCG). The workshop provided valuable discussion on water trading, the perceived water trade barriers, the information currently supplied on water allocations and overall utilisation of water in the Macalister Irrigation Area (MIA).

Along with information provided at the meeting, RMCG are currently consolidating additional data obtained from previous online surveys, phone interviews, usage history and statistics to assist with the review.

## **REPORT**

A summary of the main discussion points are outlined below.

### **Current water-use patterns**

Perennial pastures are the major crop type in the Macalister Irrigation Area. Irrigation demand for perennial pastures usually starts in early spring, reaching a peak in mid-summer, before dropping off and extending as late as the end of autumn. In some cases, demand for irrigation water may continue into June and July, including for frost mitigation.

The consultative committee have observed a shift in the types of farming systems in the district. Where once the small rural community of Newry was primarily dairy has now been further diversified to horticulture (vegetables) and beef.

Consultative committee members observed that there are areas of unirrigated land within the district which have the potential for irrigation. Many of these areas remain useful in current production systems, such as dairy, however the committee have also noticed a growing interest in greater water utilisation, particularly among ambitious and dynamic farmers in the Macalister Irrigation Area.

### **Key concerns**

Consultative committee members expressed some key concerns which are driving their interest in enhancing trade in the Macalister Irrigation Area. There were two most important factors front of mind, being water utilisation and the security or reliability of water supply.

There is a strong interest in increasing the utilisation of water in the district, while protecting the security or reliability of existing water entitlements. There is a perception that if the Macalister area is not utilising the full amount of water available, the government will not support opportunities for securing additional water for the district.

Water security concerns are likely to influence trading behaviour. Committee members shared a belief that when it comes to trading surplus water in the MIA and farmers hold onto any excess 'just in case' – with the opinion that it is better to have the water available and not use it versus not have it when it is needed.

Consultative committee members have also noticed other changes which are believed to be changing the nature of water security in the Macalister Irrigation Area. This includes lower bore levels (groundwater is often relied upon to boost water security) and the development of reuse dams. These issues are of interest to the committee but remain separate to the current project which focuses on trade barriers and the allocation model.

### **Water allocations**

Farmers heavily rely on spill in the first half of the season to assist in providing a sense of water security for the rest of the irrigation season. After the spill period closes, farmers then make their irrigation decisions for the remaining months, including decisions about trade. This influences the pattern of temporary trade activity which is skewed towards later months (March to May) of the season.

Some members of the consultative committee were concerned about allocations being released later during the announcement day. However, it was recognised that announcements were made according to schedule and allowed SRW to consider all relevant information available on the day.

There was strong interest in allocation forecasting in addition to the allocation announcements from all committee members.

### **Barriers to trade**

Much of the discussion regarding barriers to trade referred to a lack of available water from willing sellers. The committee identified the price and availability of water as a key barrier for all irrigators during dry seasons. However, they also felt that there were specific barriers to trade for different members of the farming community in normal years.

It is understood that some members of the farming community continue to be reluctant to trade water due to a perception that they will lose their water. However, it was unclear how significant or persistent this problem is.

There is a perception that the process of trading is a barrier for some, while others have found the process of trading water to be relatively straightforward (e.g. via a phone call to a local broker). Consultative committee members agreed that the lack of published information on water being offered or being sought the inability to 'pool' water parcels to facilitate larger trades, and the lack of a central process for making trades, made the process confusing and only accessible to those 'in the know'.

Committee members felt that due to the number of on-farm improvements being made on properties in the area, as well as the projected water savings generated by the modernisation works, there may be more of an appetite to trade water in the near future (improve supply).

### **Information needs**

Members are interested in being provided with more information to improve transparency in the Macalister Irrigation Area. This includes information on the current price of water being offered and historical price per megalitre. It is believed that if this information were accessible that farmers could better compare the options of retaining allocation for security or selling the water.

Consultative committee members suggested that more information to assist with forecasting would be beneficial and could make planning easier. In addition to the request for forecast allocations, it was suggested that access to tools such as calculators (i.e. water budget and projected use calculators) would improve the capacity for efficient water management and trade in the district. It was recognised that not everybody in the district would need access to this level of information and that many services are best provided by agronomists and extension officers rather than SRW.

Where there was an opportunity for SRW to contribute more information (e.g. allocation forecasting) it was felt that for those of the farming community that would like more information, that a subscription type service could be offered. One option suggested was for the subscription service to charge a small fee to contribute to the associated platform management costs. All members were of the opinion that forecasting is becoming more and more complicated over time.

### **Water trading platform**

The introduction of a trading platform into the Macalister Irrigation Area would need to accommodate a diverse range of customers. An online application could be utilised but should include the option to phone in and have a trade processed on a customer's behalf. To promote an increased level of water utilisation it could be more viable to consolidate and offer larger volumes of water instead of trying to trade small and insignificant parcels.

It was suggested that having access to a platform within the SRW website where a trade could be facilitated in the one action would be most beneficial. Farmers do not have the time available to make numerous phone calls or to complete paperwork to set in motion a water trade.

Previous stand-alone platforms have not seen the profitability to sustain their existence in the Macalister Irrigation Area due to the significant fluctuation of water trade from year to year. It is highly possible that this pattern will continue, however it was recognised that a simple accessible platform, with support from SRW, could help to facilitate trade and transparency in a developing market.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The consultant (RMCG) will compile results from the consultation with Macalister Irrigation Area customers, including information supplied by MCCC Workshop. This information will then be reported to both the Project Control Group (inc DELWP) and MCCC for discussion. This information will then inform research into appropriate platforms to trial.



Item No: 7.2  
Subject: **Communications and Engagement report – May 2022**  
Action: **For noting**  
Author: **Gemma Abela, Communications and Engagement Manager**  
Date: **12/05/2022**

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## PURPOSE

- To update the Macalister Customer Consultative Committee on recent communications and engagement activities.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Committee note the report.

## PREVIOUS COMMITTEE CONSIDERATIONS

2. Communications and Engagement activity is reported to each meeting.

## BACKGROUND

3. The Communications and Engagement team develops communications plans, issues media releases, manages the website and social media (Facebook, Twitter), customer and community engagement activities and looks after media enquiries.

## REPORT

### 4. Customer engagement CGRSWS – Macalister Irrigation District (WID/BMID)

In 2021, the Communications team assisted DELWP to help ensure our customers had input into the development of the draft Central & Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy (CGRSWS). The engagement summary is due to be published soon with the release of the final CGRSWS anticipated later this year. For more information, visit <https://engage.vic.gov.au/central-and-gippsland-region-sustainable-water-strategy>

### 5. SRW Pricing submission update:

We have listened to your views on our proposed pricing structure and developed a range of pricing options for 2023-2028. We are holding face to face and online events from 16-24 May to discuss the possible pricing options. All the events, fact sheets and a link to our survey are on the engagement hub: <https://srw.engagementhub.com.au/ps2023>

### 6. Media and public notices

Media Release: [Lake Glenmaggie releases for flood mitigation](#) (March 29)

Media Release: [Time is right to check your dams ahead of winter](#) (April)

Media Release: [End of irrigation season](#) (April 28)

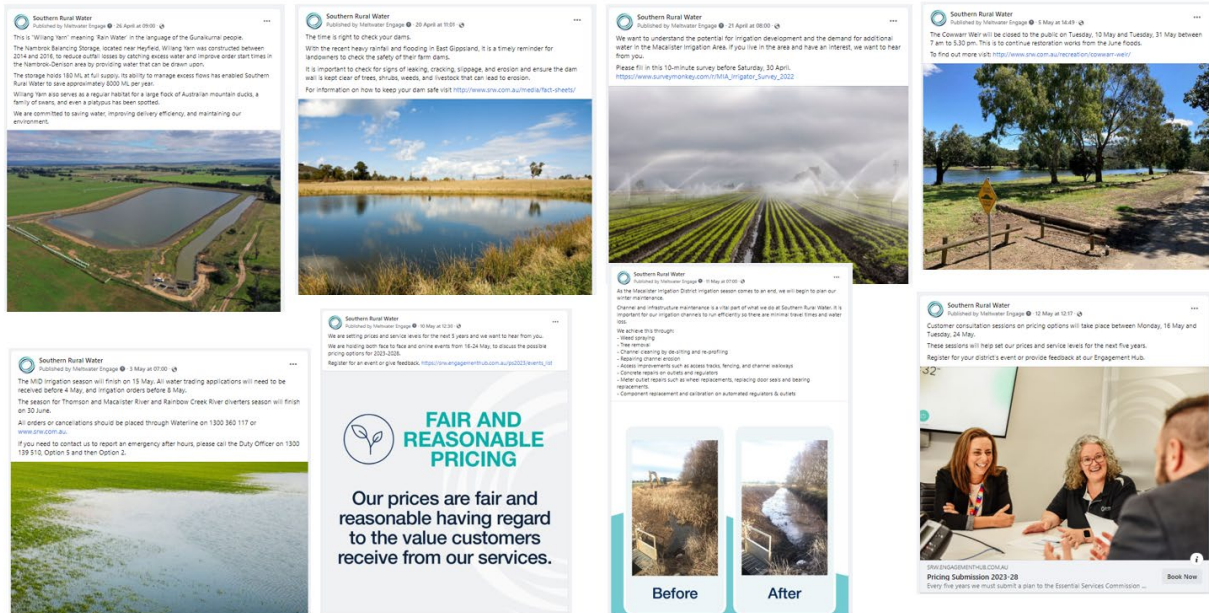
Media Release: [Customers encouraged to have their say](#) (May 12)

Public notices included end of season and winter works program, which also appeared in the Gippsland Times.

## 7. Social media:

Our social media campaigns have received good responses, and these included seeking input on our pricing submission, environmental releases, storage updates, promotion of support services, Ag Vic programs, and water allocations.

Content can include case studies, grants available, compliance reminders, encouraging water trading, account reminders and industry programs.



## 8. Campaigns:

We are working with DELWP, who are looking to develop a range of video and social media materials around compliance and water theft.

We are looking for Macalister Irrigation Area customers to be featured and interviewed during this process. To nominate potential people to participate, please speak with Simon Wilkinson, who will pass this information on to the communications team.

## 9. Upcoming Newsletters:

The weekly MID snapshots are available on our website <http://www.srw.com.au/water-systems/macalister-irrigation-district/> and the MID District Update – Autumn 2022 will be published soon.

Please email any ideas for future editions to: [Communications@srw.com.au](mailto:Communications@srw.com.au).

## 10. Board Bulletins continue to be published online.

**NEXT STEPS:** A further update will be provided at the next MCCC meeting.



Hon Lisa Neville MP

Minister for Police  
Minister for Water

8 Nicholson Street  
East Melbourne, Victoria 3002  
Telephone: 03 9637 9654  
DX210098

Ms Raelene Hanratty  
Chair  
Macalister Customer Consultative Committee  
[mcccraeleneh@gmail.com](mailto:mcccraeleneh@gmail.com)

Ref: MIN093132  
\*\*MIN093132\*\*

Dear Ms Hanratty

### SOUTHERN RURAL WATER BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Thank you for your letter of 29 March 2022 about appointments to the Board of Southern Rural Water Corporation, and for sharing with me your strong interest in achieving the best outcomes for the Macalister Irrigation District.

Under the *Water Act 1989*, I am required to ensure each person appointed to the Board of a Water Corporation, such as Southern Rural Water, has qualifications and experience relevant to the operations of the corporation. I am confident that the Board of Directors of Southern Rural Water Corporation are well-qualified and experienced to deliver the Board's functions.

I am pleased that the Southern Rural Water Board has established three customer consultative committees to provide them with important information on the needs of their customers, including the Macalister Customer Consultative Committee. I am aware of the longevity of your committee and commend your collective and ongoing commitment to represent customers of the Macalister Irrigation District, as is your role.

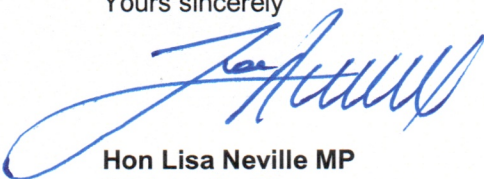
The insights and perspectives of irrigators are indeed crucial to the success of Macalister Irrigation District 2030, and I encourage you to continue to work constructively with your committee to ensure that you provide advice to the Board of Southern Rural Water Corporation to assist it in the delivery of its functions.

I will next call for expressions of interest for Board appointments to Water Corporations and Catchment Management Authorities in early 2023, and I encourage applications from any person with relevant skills and experience.

If you have further questions, please contact Annabel Moony, Acting Director, Sector Governance and Support, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, on 0456 958 948 or via email at [annabel.monny@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:annabel.monny@delwp.vic.gov.au).

Thank you again for raising these matters with me.

Yours sincerely



Hon Lisa Neville MP  
Minister for Water

22/4/22

