

Macalister Customer Consultative Committee

Minutes of Meeting 198

Date	Time	Location
28 March 2023	10:00am	SRW Maffra Office

Present

Mr Benn Thexton	Chair
Mr Alan Clyne	Committee Member
Mr Brad White	Committee Member
Mr Graeme Anderson	Committee Member
Mr Kate Lamb	Committee Member
Mr Norm Drew	Committee Member
Mr Stephen Dwyer	Committee Member

In Attendance

Ms Joanne Butterworth-Gray	Board Chair, SRW
Mr Cameron FitzGerald	Managing Director, SRW
Mr Simon Wilkinson	General Manager Service Delivery, SRW
Mr Matt Cook	Manager Water Supply East, SRW
Ms Hayley Taylor	Executive Assistant, SRW (Scribe)

Absent

Ms Jeannette Howie	Committee Member
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Guests

Amanda Castle	Acting Manager Capital Delivery
Michael Dowe	Capital Delivery Engineer

1. Acknowledgement of County

The Chair acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the land on which the meeting was held.

2. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting.

3. Declaration of conflicts of interest

The Chair asked attendees to declare any conflicts of interest relating to the business of this meeting.

There were no new conflicts raised.

4. Confirmation of minutes – Meeting 47

The minutes of meeting 196 and 197 were **approved**.

Moved: Graeme Anderson

Second: Alan Clyne

5. Business Arising

The report was taken as read.

The committee noted some customers did not receive the Macalister Irrigation District (MID) Water Delivery Delays Factsheet that was produced on behalf of Macalister Customer Consultative Committee (MCCC) members after the Special MCCC meeting in February.

Management advised that the factsheet was sent to all customers that Southern Rural Water (SRW) had an email for, except those that had opted out of receiving communications.

The committee suggested that emails are followed by a text advising customers had received an email. This may prompt customers to update their emails with SRW. It was also suggested that important notices could be put into the water ordering system.

6. PRINCIPLE MATTERS – FOR NOTING

6.1 Manager Water Supply East Update

The report was taken as read.

The committee discussed Low Reliability Water Supply (LRWS) including:

- That SRW could consider reviewing the allocation model to enable the unused High Reliability Water Supply (HRWS) to be available to all customers prior to the end of the irrigation season.

Management referred to the recent Allocation Model Review completed in 2022 and are satisfied the model is robust and fit for purpose to deliver the fairest form of water allocations to customers.

- Customers are not buying as much water as usual and are relying on their low reliability water allocation.
- The possibility of SRW providing a prediction on how much low reliability water customers could expect.
Management advised that SRW is reluctant to provide predictions of this nature as there are too many uncontrollable factors. A committee member stated that if irrigators were to rely on a prediction to make decisions, it could have a detrimental impact to their business if the prediction is wrong. Management advised that data provided in the Weekly Snapshot is continually updated and can assist customers in making informed decisions.

Management advised that depending on delivery levels, SRW will be considering increasing LRWS.

Management introduced Sean Patmore to the committee. Mr Patmore is the new Irrigation Service Delivery Supervisor – East. Mr Patmore stated he is excited to join the well-established team and the number one focus of the team is ensuring customers have what they need.

Management advised that the final report of the Hydrology and Risk Consulting (HARC) Drainage Review is due by end of March and **confirmed** recommendations from the report will be discussed at the June MCCC meeting.

Action	Action Officer	Due Date
Present recommendations of the HARC Drainage Review to the committee at the June 2023 meeting.	M. Cook	01/06/2023

6.2 Communications Report

The report was taken as read.

7. PRINCIPLE MATTERS – FOR DISCUSSION

7.1 Board Update

Ms Butterworth-Gray, Board Chair, advised:

- The Board had received a briefing at the March 2023 meeting on the MID Delivery Delays and the concerns raised by the MCCC members on behalf of irrigators as well as an update on the Siphon 7 leak and repairs.
- The Customer Engagement Review will be presented to the Board in the coming months. The report will provide an opportunity to review the way SRW

engages with customers and will help inform SRW's strategy and board agenda.

- SRW will be participating in a public forum run by the Essential Services Commission (ESC) in May regarding the Pricing Submission.

7.2 Newry Modernisation Update

Amanda Castle, Acting Manager Capital Delivery and Michael Dowe, Capital Delivery Engineer, joined the meeting at 10:48am to discuss the Phase 2 Modernisation work schedule and provide a progress update.

It was **noted**:

- Newry Irrigation upgrades are expected to be completed in October 2023 however water supply will be ready for delivery at the beginning of the season.
- Currently working with customers in regard to decommissioning works.
- As expected, excess groundwater has impacted works. The project team have the correct piping to manage this and Jaydo are adapting the trenching and pumping to manage the water and are familiar with working in these conditions.

The committee members discussed whether customers could pump from bores and water holes to help reduce the water table should be considered for future works. The size of the pipes and the requirement for them to be one meter below the surface, meaning excavations are approximately three meters below the surface was noted by a committee member.

Management advised that time had been built into the works program if pumping groundwater long term was required and this isn't expected to hold up the project. Ms Castle would pass on the feedback to see if there was merit in customers pumping groundwater.

The committee questioned whether the main pipeline will be held up by the one customer that has not signed on. Management advised that they are confident that a resolution will be reached, and the project will not be delayed.

A member stated Jaydo are doing a great job in restoring the site once the pipe had been installed. The Managing Director said this was pleasing to hear as it is SRW's expectation that this would occur, and the feedback would be passed onto the CEO of Jaydo.

Management advised the new MID Project Lead will be Matt Weatherall who is starting early April. Mr Weatherall has previously worked for SRW and brings a wealth of experience to the project.

7.3 Macalister Avon Irrigation Development Project Update

Due to the presenter being on unplanned leave the presentation will be held over to the June 2023 meeting.

Mr White, MCCC member and member of the Macalister Avon Irrigation Development Project Consultative Committee provided an overview of the last meeting to the committee noting:

- The different options being considered to get water from the MID across the Avon River.
- There will still be restrictions with regard to channel capacity, and SRW will need to consider utilising low supply periods to supply water across the Avon and there will be a heavy reliance on on-farm storage.
- Discussion around the positive effects for the Avon, and whether customers had the appetite to give up their Avon entitlement for the piped water.

The Managing Director reiterated that project is an options study and that if it was to progress to funding there will be a requirement that the environment and Traditional Owners (TO's) aspirations will need to be considered.

Action	Action Officer	Due Date
Macalister Avon Irrigation Development Project Update to be presented at the June 2023 MCCC meeting	P. Winbanks	01/06/2023

7.4 MID Delivery Delays

Management advised the Matt Stagg, Projects and Innovation Specialist is leading the work to explore potential changes to the ordering system. A tender will be released in the next week for a consultant to undertake this work. Management reiterated that SRW want to ensure this work is completed by experts to ensure the best possible outcome for customers.

The committee **requested** that the consultants speak to the MCCC members or the MCCC Chair to ensure the issues discussed at the February 2023 MCCC meeting are communicated. Management advised they will ensure customers are consulted as part of the review.

Action	Action Officer	Due Date
Consultants engaged to explore potential changes to the ordering system will be directed to consult with the MCCC members or MCCC Chair	M. Stagg	01/06/2023

on water delivery delay issues discussed at the February 2023 MCCC meeting.

8. COMMITTEE MATTERS

8.1 Important issues from other customer committees

The Managing Director advised that:

- The Werribee Bacchus Marsh Customer Consultative Committee (WBMCCC) discussed a project investigating the reconfiguration on how their water is delivered. The project looks at a new source of recycled water into the district, that is better quality and more reliable than the current option. There could also be a benefit to the environment and urban water customers. No customers would be forced to give up their river water rights, but could choose to do so, to access the new recycled water source. This project is being developed in partnership with urban water corps.
- The Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum (SGRF) discussed the Water is Life policy, and the discussion centred around engagement with TO groups around water entitlements. Mr Drew, outlined that it was a very informative session and had good engagement from SGRF members.

8.2 Matters referred to/by the Board/Board Committee

No matters have been referred to the committee by the board or board committee.

9. General Business

There were no items of General Business raised.

10. Meeting evaluation

The Chair asked for feedback on the effectiveness of this meeting.

The members advised that this meeting was one of the better MCCC meetings in recent times and there was a feeling that everyone has been included in the meeting. The Committee Chair acknowledged the agenda is relevant and focused on current issues.

The committee **requested** that instead of lunch at the conclusion of the meeting, could the meeting commence with morning tea instead. Management **agreed** to the request and this will be implemented going forward.

Action	Action Officer	Due Date
Organise morning tea for MCCC meetings going forward, instead of lunch.	H. Taylor	01/06/2023

11. Next meeting

The next meeting of the Macalister Customer Consultative Committee is Tuesday 27 June 2023 and will be held in the SRW Maffra Office.

12. Close

With no further business the meeting was declared closed at 11:44am.