

**MACALISTER CUSTOMER CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF MEETING 197**  
**Held 10.00am Thursday 9 February 2023**  
**SRW, Maffra**

**PRESENT**

Mr Benn Thexton, Chair  
Mr Steve Dwyer  
Mr Norm Drew  
Mr Alan Clyne  
Mr Graeme Anderson, OAM  
Mr Brad White

**SRW Representatives**

Mr Cameron FitzGerald, Managing Director  
Mr Simon Wilkinson, General Manager Service Delivery  
Mr Matthew Cook, Manager Water Supply East  
Mr Matthew Stagg, Technology and Innovation Specialist  
Mrs Hayley Taylor, Executive Assistant

**APOLOGIES** Ms Kate Lamb

**ABSENT** Mrs Jeannette Howie

**1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

The Committee noted Ms Kate Lamb had submitted her apologies.

**2. PURPOSE**

Management noted the purpose of the meeting was to respond to and discuss the issues relating to water delivery delays in the MID, drainage works and maintenance, irrigation guidance and advice and SRWs strategic direction.

Mr FitzGerald noted his appreciation of the members raising the issues and for their time for attending this special meeting.

Management advised that all questions raised by members will be answered during this meeting and a way forward will be agreed and noted the questions raised by the committee, including customers waiting 8+ days for water.

**3. WATER DELIVERY DELAYS**

**Ordering System**

Management provided an overview of how the ordering system works noting the Demand Management System (DMS) is a flexible system for customers to be able to order their own

water. The order is confirmed instantly if there is capacity in the system. Planners review orders to try to make the system as efficient as possible.

The committee discussed the change in customer behaviour when ordering with some customers ordering earlier than normal and others changing their ordering to 'lifestyle' orders, where they stop and start irrigating over several days, rather than take their water in one go.

### **The season so far**

Management provided an overview of the season so far and noted the following environmental factors that contributed to the delivery delays:

- wet weather for extended period of time during the first half of the season, with rain falling at the right time replicating a normal irrigation pattern.
- Customers having 100% allocation but have not needing to access the water until late December/ early January due to the wet conditions.

It was noted that some customers book their orders a month or two out and then adjust as required closer to the delivery date. Some customers have realised that this is a work around to ensure they get the water when they want.

### **Contributing factors to water delivery delays**

Management discussed other contributing factors noting:

- Best practice farming – there has been a change to the way that farmers water their farms. Farmers want the same volume out of less outlets to allow for higher flow. This uses a large amount of capacity within the system. SRW has had to turn down requests for higher flow outlets as they would block out the entire capacity within a channel. DMS allows the cancellation of orders at the last minute which effects the capacity.
- TCC – needs to reserve a small amount of capacity in the system to work effectively. Planners have manual capability to override the system in peak demand times, but this is a very time consuming workaround for planners and is only available in a small number of sections. Planners try to juggle orders to get as many customers their water as possible.

### **Notice given for orders**

Management advised that of the water orders that SRW have been able to deliver, 40% of customers have provided 2 days or less notice. It was noted that the Customer Charter advises that 3 day's notice is requested prior to the expected delivery date. A Committee member suggested that customers must give 3 day's notice and cannot cancel orders at

short notice. Mr Cook advised that SRW wanted to deliver the water to customers so if there is capacity in the system SRW will do everything possible to facilitate the delivery.

#### **Current actions/discussion**

The Committee discussed:

- the information provided by SRW,
- how SRW can better advise customers of upcoming dry periods,
- Changes to the systems could include:
  - Utilising the ordering system as is with some minor changes to assist in reducing wait times.
  - blocking customers from ordering water once they order a predetermined volume or percentage of entitlement,
  - using Delivery Share within the ordering system to ensure capacity is in the system for customers.
- In these cases, farmers may need to consider on farm storages so they can order water when available and then they can water from the storage at a time that suits them. This is similar to the way Vegetable Farmers set up their farms.
- The importance of ensuring that all customers are treated the same and have the same access to water when considering changing the ordering system.
- The potential for more delays as the system gets bigger (potential expansion).

The committee agreed that if any restrictions or changes are made to the ordering system they must come from the customers. SRW and the committee must look at all models including pay for use, and setting limits during peak times before a decision to change the system is made. In the meantime, better communication on issues to customers is a good first step.

#### **4. DRAINAGE WORKS AND MAINTENANCE**

Management advised there is a review underway regarding the drainage systems across all of SRW. Management will present the findings to the committee once the report has been finalised.

The Chair stated that SRW needs a strategic plan to manage drainage systems as suitable drainage is critical to supporting a modernised system. Management noted that the current review would help form a drainage plan.

#### **Season weed spraying**

Management noted the types of drain maintenance completed over the last 3 years including:

- distance sprayed and litres of chemical used,
- Magnicide H program and that mechanical cleaning had been completed during the season, instead of waiting for winter to clean channels.
- A new chemical is to be trailed in the winter of 2023 to clear parts of the channel system.

## 5. IRRIGATION GUIDANCE AND ADVICE

### **Low Reliability Information**

The committee advised the allocation model that is linked in the Allocation Notification SMS is very detailed.

Management **agreed** to create a factsheet separate from the allocation model specifically addressing low reliability allocation.

Management advised the Weekly Snapshot is continuing to be updated and will continue to work with customers to ensure the information is relevant.

The committee suggested adding the probability of low reliability water supply to the report to allow customers to manage their risk profile.

## 6. STRATEGIC DIRECTION

### **Expansion of the district**

The committee discussed the potential expansion of the MID and noted that expanding the customer base allows for more funding, but customers may not see the benefit of expanding the area if issues like the delivery delays continue. Concerns were noted regarding the impact of climate change potentially making weather events that contributed to the delivery delays becoming more frequent.

Mr FitzGerald stated that the opportunity with growth is additional investment opportunities which could include greater channel capacity benefits to all customers.

The committee discussed internal KPI's such as channel performance and order delivered within 1 day of request. Management advised KPI's within the Pricing Submission have been proposed to the ESC but additional internal KPI's can be set and these will be considered as part of a review of the delivery system.

The Committee **requested** SRW report back to the committee on ML delivered during the day vs night.

## 7. MEETING EVALUATION

The committee thanked SRW for the standard of information presented and the discussion.

It was **agreed** that a factsheet from the MCCC would be developed and sent to impacted customers by SRW, informing them of the issues discussed and details of the MCCC members.

## 8. MEETING CLOSE

With there being no further business, the meeting closed at 11:30am.

	<b>Sept 2021</b>	<b>Oct 2021</b>	<b>Dec 2021</b>	<b>Feb 2022</b>	<b>April 2022</b>	<b>May 2022</b>	<b>July 2022</b>	<b>Sept 2022</b>	<b>Oct 2022</b>	<b>Dec 2022</b>	<b>Feb 2023</b>
Raelene Hanratty	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			
Graeme Anderson	P	P	P	Apol	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Stephen Dwyer	P	P	P	Apol		Apol	Apol	P	P	P	P
Jeanette Howie	P	P	P	P	Apol	P	P	P		Apol	
Norm Drew	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Alan Clyne	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Kate Lamb	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Apol
Brad White	P	P	P	P	Apol	P	P	P	P		P
Benn Thexton	P	P	P	P	P	P	Apol	Apol	P	P	P

**P**      Attended Meeting  
 Apol     Notification of apology  
 Blank    Did not attend