

Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum

Minutes of Meeting 49

Date	Time	Location
2 June 2023	9:30am	Via MS Teams

Present

Mr Ross Ingram	Chair
Ms Josie Zilm	Forum Member, Deputy Chair
Mr Matt Gleeson	Forum Member
Mr Daniel Toohey	Forum Member
Mr Norm Drew	Forum Member
Mr Steve Marshall	Forum Member

In Attendance

Dr Jane Doolan	Board Director, SRW
Mr Cameron FitzGerald	Managing Director, SRW
Mr Simon Wilkinson	General Manager Service Delivery, SRW
Mr Bryce Morden	Manager Groundwater and Rivers, SRW
Ms Hayley Taylor	Executive Assistant, SRW (minutes)

Apologies

Mr Daniel Hammond	Forum Member
Mr Bruce Vallance	Forum Member

Absent

Mr Kevin Stark	Forum Member
Mr Damien Moore	Forum Member
Mr Tom Wallace	Forum Member

Guests

Anthony Jenkins	Senior Policy Officer, DEECA
Matthew Hudson	Principle Hydrogeologist, SRW

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 48

The minutes of meeting 48 held on 17 March 2023 were **approved**.

Moved: Matt Gleeson

Second: Norm Drew

5. Business Arising

The report was taken as read.

The following points were discussed:

- Southern Rural Water (SRW) provided a link to documentation on the Water Quality Study within the meeting pack.
- Cultural Training options were provided to the committee within the meeting pack. Members were encouraged to refer to the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) maps website to find RAPs in their area.

6. GUEST SPEAKERS

6.1 GM2023

Mr Anthony Jenkins, Senior Policy Officer, DEECA, joined the meeting and discussed the Groundwater Management 2030 (GM2030) project. The following points were discussed:

- GM2030 supports point 4.18 in the Central Gippsland Regional Sustainable Water Strategy (CGSWS) to update groundwater management arrangements and implement priorities for reform.
- GM2030 is a statement of priorities for the next seven years for DEECA, SRW and other water corporations.
- There are three outcomes identified in GM2023:
 - Shared understanding of groundwater and its uses for evidence based management.
 - Modern tools in the state-wide framework for flexible and cost-effective groundwater management.

- Streamlined effective licensing, trade roles and controls on groundwater use that support changing water uses.
- 13 priority areas have been identified that will be ensure the outcomes are achieved.
- Since 2022, DEECA has formalised the governance structure, commenced work on Priority Area 1, and commenced stakeholder engagement on other priority areas.
- To the end of 2023, DEECA will be monitoring feedback on GM2030 priority area's in relation to timing and scope.

DEECA requested feedback from the committee, especially regarding how the project team can engage with groundwater users.

The committee inquired about the project's scope and confirmed that it is a state-wide project, with relevance to local management areas becoming apparent as the project progresses.

DEECA expressed willingness to provide regular updates and a program of work in relation to priority areas to the group, as well as work with SRW on finalising the implementation plan which will also help inform how DEECA engage with groundwater users.

The committee inquired whether:

- Priority one considers reducing Permissible Consumptive Volumes (PCV's) in response to climate change. DEECA stated that outcomes of the project should not be pre-empted.
- Changes to the use of groundwater are considered within the project. The committee was advised that the sustainable yields are being reviewed by DEECA and the GM2030 project considered scenarios relating to changed groundwater use.

The Chair thanked Mr. Jenkins for the presentation and expressed the desire for ongoing engagement and progress updates.

Mr Jenkins left the meeting.

6.2 Source, Demand and Values – seasonal scenarios

Mr Matthew Hudson, Principle Hydrogeologist, SRW, provided an update on the Source Assessment project, specifically the dry season scenario's as requested by the committee in a previous meeting.

In regard to dry season scenario's, the project identified potential restrictions of 20-40% of the time, and in the 2070 high climate scenario, restrictions could be in place 40-60% of the time.

The Chair thanked Mr Hudson for the presentation and conveyed the committee's appreciation for the dry climate scenarios.

6.3 Interactive groundwater maps

Mr Matthew Hudson, Principal Hydrogeologist, SRW, provided a demonstration of updated groundwater and rivers page on the SRW website and showcased how to access information using the interactive groundwater maps. The webpage makes it easier to find the relevant groundwater management plans by using an interactive map to take users directly to the relevant document.

The committee provided positive feedback on the usability of the maps.

The Chair thanked Mr Hudson for the presentation.

Mr Hudson left the meeting.

7. PRINCIPLE MATTERS – FOR DISCUSSION

7.1 Board Update

Dr Jane Doolan, Board Representative, SRW, advised the members of issues the board is currently discussing, including:

- Finalising the Price Submission and responding to the ESC after the posting of the draft Price Submission.
- Asset Management and implementing systems and plans into place to manage asset replacement programs.
- Customer engagement review.
- Debt management strategy.
- Completion of the Dam Safety review.
- Ongoing Enterprise Bargaining.

Key messages from the committee will be communicated to the board at the next meeting.

7.2 Manager Groundwater and Rivers Update

The report was taken as read.

The Manager Groundwater and Rivers advised:

- SRW has signed up with FinesVictoria to be able to issue infringement notices, which will allow SRW to issue notices for minor breaches to the water act.
- Warning letters will continue to be used as a first step for minor breaches and SRW is working to develop capacity with field officers in regard to compliance, including undertaking further training.

7.3 Update on GWR strategic focus areas

The committee discussed the relevance of the focus areas identified in the paper and provided the following feedback:

- They would like to see long-term projects progress faster and a renewed commitment to finalising and communicating the outcomes of projects that have been on the table for a long period of time.

- Mitchell licensing arrangements: Some members suggested consideration is given to the conversion of over-allocated aquifer licenses to winter fill entitlements and converting annual licenses to 15-year licenses.
- The ability to take water when water levels are high was also raised for consideration.

The Managing Director acknowledged the feedback and expressed that progress since the last meeting on Mitchell river water sales indicates SRW's commitment to addressing the committee's concerns regarding timeliness of implementing actions.

8. PRINCIPLE MATTERS – FOR NOTING

8.1 Communications Report

The report was taken as read.

8.2 mySRW update

The report was taken as read.

9. COMMITTEE MATTERS

9.1 Important issues from other customer committees

The Managing Director provided updates on issues discussed in other customer committees, including:

- MCCC is discussing delivery issues which have resulted in significant delays in customers accessing water.
- WBMCC is discussing drainage issues and receiving updates on how SRW is improving asset management in their area. This includes a discussion of a project involving the replacement of river water with high reliability recycled water, clarifying that it would be an opt-in project to address long-term reliability concerns.
- Customer engagement review paper to be reviewed by the board in June, with the board previously emphasising for the need for clear communication with customers without those conversations being impeded by other stakeholders. An overview of the recommendations as endorsed by the board will be provided to the committee at the next meeting.
- Media report on Moorabool Dams and SRW's investigation into illegal dam constructions. SRW has undertaken site inspections at many of these sites and has now deployed drones to survey dams where there are allegations of illegal constructions. SRW does not tolerate people taking water without the appropriate licencing.
The committee discussed the option of actively conducting landscape reviews. Management expressed the intention to implement such reviews in the future.

Action	Action Officer	Due Date
Present the Customer Engagement Review recommendations as endorsed by the board	C. FitzGerald	30/08/2023

9.2 Matters referred to/by the Board/Board Committee

The board representative advised that the following items will be taken back to the board:

- Strategic priorities – the committee would like to see long-term projects finalised and outcomes communicated including Mitchell licencing and winter fill arrangements as well as the possibility of customers being able to take water when water levels are high flow events (eg. during a flood).
- Encouragement from the committee that SRW use remote sensing for unauthorised works.

10. General Business

The members raised the following items:

Quorum for meetings: The committee discussed whether there was a quorum at the meeting. The Managing Director stated that although it is preferable to have as many members present as possible, he was not concerned if a quorum was not in attendance unless there was a motion that was to be put to the board.

In-person meetings: the committee **confirmed** that in-person meetings remain exclusively in person, but a hybrid meetings would be considered for unplanned circumstances that prevents a member from attending where they had previously indicated they would attend in person.

11. Meeting evaluation

The Chair sought feedback on the effectiveness of this meeting.

The Chair expressed satisfaction with the meeting, and positive comments were made by members regarding the ability to provide critical feedback, the value of the cross-sectional customer representation and the ability to connect directly with the board via the board representative.

12. Next meeting

The committee discussed the date of the next meeting and **agreed** to adjust the date to suit member's availability.

The committee **agreed** that members are to advise SRW whether or not they are attending meetings by responding to the meeting requests.

Action	Action Officer	Due Date
Confirm the next SGRF meeting date with members.	H. Taylor	30/06/2023

13. Close

With no further business the meeting was declared closed at 11:12am.

The Minutes of the Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum meeting 49 were approved at the Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum meeting 50 on Wednesday 20 September 2023.