

SGRF AGENDA

Meeting no. 57

9.00am, Friday 2 May 2025
Online via MS Teams

*'We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we are meeting.
We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present, and the Elders from other communities
who may be here today.'*



**Southern
Rural Water**

Managing Water. Serving Communities.

Our Vision

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



Our Trademark Values

We are **Always Safe** and **Accountable** working as **One Team** to deliver a lasting **Legacy**.

Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum member locations



Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum - 2 May 2025

Southern Rural Water's Groundwater and Rivers Strategic Focus Areas

June 2024 – June 2025

There are five strategic focus areas for SRW in the Groundwater and Rivers area over the next 12 months:

1. Continued advocacy for sustainable access to water for irrigators via the implementation of GM2030, policy reforms in surface water management and key stakeholder groups.
2. Continue to encourage a flexible trading market through improved internal procedures and Government policies.
3. Provide more real time information for customers on water usage following the integration of meter reading data with mySRW portal to improve decision making.
4. Undertake more detailed water resource assessment across our systems through investment of unregulated water sales funds and the continuation of the Supply/Demand projects.
5. Understanding the implications of rapidly evolving cultural water policy on customer aspirations for improved access to water.

An update on what SRW is doing in relation to these focus areas is provided in the Groundwater and Rivers Update at each meeting.

Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum

Meeting 57

Date	Time	Location
2 May 2025	9.00am – 12.00pm	Online via MS Teams

		Topic		
1		Acknowledgement of County	Chair	9.00am
2		Welcome and Apologies	Chair	
3		Declaration of conflicts of interest	All	
4		Confirmation of minutes – Meeting 56	Chair	
	4.1	Attachment – Draft Minutes SGRF Meeting 56, 7 February 2025		
5		Business Arising	Chair	
	5.1	Attachment - Business arising from previous meetings		
6		<u>GUEST SPEAKER</u>		
	6.1	GM2030 Update	Beth Ashworth, DEECA	9.05am
7		<u>PRINCIPAL MATTERS – FOR DISCUSSION</u>		
	7.1	Rosters and Restrictions – process	Russ Tomlin	9.35am
	7.2	Process improvements – Applications and Water Sales process	Penny Winbanks	10.00am
8		<u>PRINCIPAL MATTERS – FOR NOTING</u>		
	8.1	Groundwater and Rivers update	Penny Winbanks	10.20am
	8.2	Communications report		10.40am

9		<u>COMMITTEE MATTERS</u>		
	9.1	Cultural Awareness Training	Penny Winbanks	10.45am
	9.2	Important issues from other customer committees	Cameron FitzGerald	11.05am
	9.3	Matters referred to the Board/board committee	Jane Doolan	11.15am
	9.4	2025 Committee workplan		11.25am
10		<u>GENERAL BUSINESS</u>	All	11.30am
11		Meeting evaluation		11.40am
12		Next meeting		
13		Close		

Item No: 1

Subject: **Acknowledgement of Country**

'We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we are meeting. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present, and the Elders from other communities who may be here today.'

Item No: 2

Subject: **Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair will welcome attendees and note any apologies for this meeting.

Item No: 3

Subject: **Declaration of Conflicts of Interest**

The Chair will ask forum members to declare any conflicts of interest relating to the business of this meeting.

Item No: 4
Subject: Confirmation of minutes – Meeting 56
Action: For approval
Author: Hayley Taylor – Executive Assistant
Date: 17/04/2025

PURPOSE

1. To ensure that the minutes taken of committee meeting 56 are an accurate and sufficient record of discussions held and decisions made at the meeting.

RECOMMENDATION: That the committee approves the minutes of meeting 56 held on Friday 7 February 2025.

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE CONSIDERATIONS

2. Minutes are confirmed at each committee meeting.

BACKGROUND

3. Draft minutes are circulated after each committee meeting. Any suggested changes are captured as track changes, for consideration and confirmation at the following meeting.

REPORT

4. Draft minutes of meeting 56, held online via MS Teams, on Friday 7 February 2025 are provided in attachment 4.1.
5. On 28 February 2025, Committee Member, Mr Norm Drew, contacted the meeting Secretary to discuss the draft minutes of meeting 56 and requested the following amendments:
 - a) In regard to agenda item 4, Confirmation of minutes – meeting 56, Mr Drew expressed the following minute did not adequately acknowledge that he believes
 - b) the distribution of water sales went against the constitution of the time and only included customers within the Macalister Irrigation District and water efficiencies should have been applied to the entire Macalister, Thompson system, not just the MID.

There was one occasion where a distribution of water savings was made to customers in the Macalister Irrigation District, and Mr Drew strongly disagreed with this process. Mr Drew reminded the committee that the Thomson, Macalister is one regulated district. The Managing Director highlighted that all water sales held during his time at SRW had been open auctions available to all eligible irrigators, and this will continue into the future.

The following amendment (in red) has been included in the minute for consideration by the committee:

There was one occasion where a distribution of water savings was made to customers in the Macalister Irrigation District, and Mr Drew strongly disagreed with this process expressing dissatisfaction that water efficiencies were not applied to the entire Thomson, Macalister system. Mr Drew reminded the committee that the Thomson, Macalister is one regulated district. The Managing Director highlighted that all water sales held during his time at SRW had been open auctions available to all eligible irrigators, and this will continue into the future.

- c) In regard to agenda item 10, General Business – Nuclear Position, Mr Drew noted a spelling mistake, and requested the following amendment (in red) to provide clarity that the comments made by Mr Dwyer in regard to Nuclear Power generation were his own.

Nuclear position – It was highlighted that an MCCC member made representations to an inquiring inquiry into Nuclear Power generation, that he was speaking on behalf of all customers and the MCCC. The Managing Director advised Mr Thomas Dwyer appeared at an inquiry into nuclear power held in the Latrobe Valley and made representations that he spoke on behalf of the committee and customers. The MCCC had not discussed nor formed a position on the matter and the comments made by Mr Dwyer were his own. The Chair of the MCCC wrote to Mr Darren Chester and the ABC advising that the MCCC does not hold a view on the matter. Correspondence received back from Mr Darren Chester's Office noted the letter will be included in the formal minutes of the inquiry, ensuring the correct information is noted as part of the inquiry. Mr Drew expressed his disappointment that Mr Dwyer remained on the MCCC after he made incorrect representations.

6. **Budget impact:** Nil

7. **Link to strategy:** Nil.

8. **Risk:** Committee meeting minutes are a public record and may be subject to release under Freedom of Information. Directors should ensure that minutes accurately and appropriately reflect the discussion and decisions of the meeting.

NEXT STEPS

Who	Action
Meeting Secretary	Once confirmed, the minutes will be saved in Southern Rural Water's document management system and Southern Rural Water's Website.

Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum

Minutes of Meeting 56

Date	Time	Location
7 February 2025	9:00am	Online, via MS Teams

Present

Mr Ross Ingram	Chair
Mr Bruce Vallance	Forum Member/Deputy Chair
Mr Daniel Hammond	Forum Member
Mr Norm Drew	Forum Member
Mr Matt Gleeson	Forum Member
Mr Matt Zagami	Forum Member

In Attendance

Mr Cameron FitzGerald	Managing Director, SRW
Mr Simon Wilkinson	General Manager Service Delivery, SRW
Ms Penny Winbanks	Manager Statutory Functions, SRW
Ms Hayley Taylor	Executive Assistant, SRW (minutes)

Apologies

Dr Jane Doolan	Board Director, SRW
Mr Kevin Stark	Forum Member

Absent

Mr Steven Marshall	Forum Member
Mr Daniel Toohey	Forum Member

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 and noted the apologies.

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 by SGRF members.

4. Confirmation of minutes – Meeting 55

Mr Drew requested an amendment to the minutes in item 6.1 Roundtable Discussion from

The distribution of water savings had previously been restricted to irrigators in the MID and Mr Drew reminded the committee that the Thomson, Macalister is one regulated district. The Managing Director highlighted the water sales held during his time at SRW had been open auctions available to all eligible irrigators, and this will continue into the future.

to

There was one occasion where a distribution of water savings was made to customers in the Macalister Irrigation District, and Mr Drew strongly disagreed with this process expressing dissatisfaction that water efficiencies were not applied to the entire Thomson, Macalister system. Mr Drew reminded the committee that the Thomson, Macalister is one regulated district. The Managing Director highlighted that all water sales held during his time at SRW had been open auctions available to all eligible irrigators, and this will continue into the future.

The Chair requested the minutes of meeting 55 remain as written, and the clarification above would be included in the minutes of this meeting (meeting 56).

The Chair reminded the committee of the process to review and request amendments to draft minutes, ensuring that they review the draft minutes when they are sent to the committee after the meeting, and ensure any amendments are communicated to the committee secretary prior to the next meeting.

The minutes of meeting 55 held on 15 November 2024 were **approved**.

Moved: Bruce Vallance

Second: Daniel Hammond

5. Business Arising

The report was taken as read.

6. Communications report

The report was taken as read.

The Chair commented on the Communications report highlighting the benefit of being able to see the presence of SRW consolidated into one report, as a way of showing the committee the value SRW are creating. The committee discussed the factsheets summarised within attachment 6.1, observing the factsheets provide good, positive, and timely information for customers.

7. PRINCIPLE MATTERS – for discussion

7.1 Seasonal outlook in your area

The members participated in a roundtable discussion where they provided insights into the seasonal outlook in their area.

Mr Bruce Vallance – South West Limestone

- No reprieve for farmers, with no rainfall in the area. People who rely on dams for domestic and stock and dairy are starting to look at options for alternative water supplies. There have been no complaints about bore levels, with the lack of rainfall appearing to only impact surface water at the moment.

Mr Matt Gleeson – Morwell River

- Rain fell at the right time, but the area is drying out now, including dams.
- Discussed the visibility of SRW staff, advising he had not seen SRW around in the last few months.

Mr Matt Zagami – Wairewa / Snowy River

- The Orbost area has had a decent summer, with some storms through January providing decent rainfall, but it is now starting to dry off.
- Working with Orbost Group and stakeholders including SRW to educate growers as to how to trade water to utilise the water in the Snowy River.

Mr Daniel Hammond – Mitchell River and Wy Yung GW

- Starting to dry out.
- Reports that dry land stock farmers are watching their dams now.
- His storage dam is still full, and he expects to irrigate intensively for six weeks before autumn provides some relief.
- Mitchell River is on Stage 1 restrictions, for the first time in a while. Rosters for restrictions do not appear to have been rolled out seamlessly, with customers ringing SRW asking for updated rosters. The Field Officer in the area is working through his first prolonged restriction period. Early communication is important when rosters and restrictions are expected.

Mr Norm Drew – Thomson River

- One person on the Cowwarr Channel has been having issues with getting water at both the flow and timing they required.

Mr Ross Ingram – Mitchell River

- It took a while to set up infrastructure to comply with restrictions on the river.
- Currently cannot use all the water he has allocated.
- Times like this justify the upgrades and installation of dams.

Mr Kevin Stark – Border Zone Groundwater

- Mr Stark was an apology for the meeting but provided the following comments prior to the meeting. *The area is experiencing extremely dry and hot conditions, with a lot of people looking for water. There is also a constant threat of bushfires.*

8. PRINCIPAL MATTERS – for noting

8.1 Groundwater and Rivers update

The report was taken as read.

Management explained the current state of the Mitchell River “shelf” water, with five parties indicating they wanted to purchase the water through the trading platform. SRW are currently reviewing the eligibility of the applicants, ensuring that processes and expectations of customers. All the ‘shelf’ water from the Mitchell River is under offer.

The Committee discussed the interest in water in the Parratte and Dilwyn aquifers. SRW are working through the interest in the water in these aquifers which will then inform the process SRW is required to follow to allocate this water. A member advised it would be beneficial to have this finalised soon, so people can plan and access the water. A member inquired as to whether the “off the shelf price” still stands. Management advised that if water is bought off the shelf the price still stands, but if there is more interest in the water, than there is available water, an auction would be held, with a reserve price being set as part of the auction process. The Committee inquired whether SRW has the staff available to ensure the process is completed in a timely manner. Management advised that they are prioritising efforts in the south-west given the particularly dry times being experienced by customers in this region. Management highlighted that just because someone has bought water, it does not mean they can be issued a licence straight away, there is due diligence required to be completed.

8.2 Government response to drought conditions in the south-west

The Committee noted the report.

Management advised that since the writing of the report, SRW has been given an opportunity to present at an AgVic online seminar, focussed on stock water access. The online seminar is being promoted to the Barwon South West region, however, may be available more broadly. The SRW presentation will focus on private rights to water, licensing requirements for D&S bores and dams, process, and cost advice as well as considerations should people find their D&S bore yield dropping, or dams drying up.

9. COMMITTEE MATTERS

9.1 Focus Area's for SGRF leading into the 2026 Corporate Plan

The committee discussed the strategic focus areas for the committee and whether there are any new focus areas for the committee.

The Chair discussed the change in focus for SRW toward compliance and zero tolerance, and whether SRW needs to look at bringing core business back to the customers, and back to basic's such as providing roster and restriction information to customers each season.

Mr Hammond, seconded the sentiments of the Chair, emphasising that at the top of the vision statement from SRW is "Customer and Community Value." He highlighted the timeliness of action from SRW around the issuance of Winterfill licences. It took too long considering the amount of money paid. Additionally, when receiving information regarding rosters on the Mitchell River, the information had the contact details of an employee that had recently left the business. Previously customers in the area received a daily text from a previous field officer regarding restrictions but this no longer happens. There is an opportunity to improve customer service by providing early and regular information to customers.

Mr Vallance noted the importance of SRW's advocacy for the southwest and discussed the importance of the GM2030 project to customers in the area. A recent meeting held by Food and Fibre Great South Coast was attended by SRW, customers, Catchment Management Authorities and DEECA. Mr Vallance expressed there is still work to be performed by the department to address concerns raised by the committee regarding the security of entitlement being affected by plantation timber. The Managing Director highlighted SRW will continue to advocate for consistent licencing for all water users with DEECA, the new Minister for Water and other stakeholders.

Mr Gleeson advised the visibility of SRW has been low around his area and wants to ensure current focus areas are addressed before removing them. Mr Gleeson also discussed ensuring customers are receiving roster information in a timely manner when restrictions are imposed.

Mr Zagami discussed the need to consider how upstream trading rules are applied and the affect current rules have on enabling access to water. He stated that the government is not listening to those advocating for changes to trading rules and SRW could look at opportunities to influence through/with other stakeholder groups.

The Managing Director thanked the committee for the feedback, and committed to taking the feedback on board, and to improve the area's raised by the committee. He stated while SRW may not always get it right, the organisation is committed to ensuring that the feedback is taken on board and actioned.

9.2 Customer Committee Code of Conduct

The committee was advised that SRW is in the process of developing cultural training which will be rolled out to Customer Committee's in 2025. Further information will be provided to the committee as the training comes online.

9.3 Important issues from other customer committees

Mr Cameron FitzGerald, Managing Director, SRW advised:

- The MCCC met in December 2024, and discussed the upcoming warm weather outlook, and the protocols SRW had put in place for periods of high demand. Spill was not declared in 2024, which changed the profile of the demand in the Macalister Irrigation District.
- Allocation and permanent sales have and are continuing to occur, putting as much water into production as possible.
- The MCCC discussed the Avon Valley project. The view of the committee was to ensure that all demand in the existing footprint must be met, and service to existing customers must be better, before the district is considered for expansion.
- With the support of the Werribee Reconfiguration Reference Group, a business case has been submitted to the federal government, seeking funding for a detailed business case to transition Werribee Customers off river water and onto fully recycled water.

9.4 Matters referred to/by the Board/Board Committee

The Managing Director, provided an update on matters that are currently being considered by the board highlighting:

- Focus on technology transformation to improve internal and external systems, with the aim to gain efficiencies, which will free up staff to spend more time assisting customers with complex water management matters.
- Discussion around matters raised by the SGRF at the November meeting with an expectation for SRW to improve these processes.
- Will note to the board the committee's comments regarding a need to be better focused on customers as per SRW's vision.

The Committee inquired whether SRW was able to fill staffing vacancies. The Managing Director discussed that in some area's such as engineering and ICT, it can be more difficult to recruit, particularly in rural or regional areas. SRW, being a rural water corporation want to recruit wherever possible in rural and regional areas so staff can understand the challenges that may be experienced by customers and the community the live and work in.

9.5 2025 Committee workplan

The committee **noted** the 2025 committee workplan.

10. General Business

The Chair called for any items of General Business.

Mr Vallance inquired as to why a water entitlement is limited to a specific area of land. It was **agreed** Management would take the matter offline but explained that it is a licencing requirement to ensure the volume of water is used sustainably and productively on the land that is irrigated. Management will review its practices on the matter and ensure instruments reflect contemporary practice (i.e. amalgamation of licences).

Permanent Water Sales – Mr Drew commented that he hopes Permanent Water Sales will be open to all irrigators in the Macalister area. Management advised this was the process.

Nuclear position – It was highlighted that an MCCC member made representations to an **inquiring inquiry** into Nuclear Power generation, that he was speaking on behalf of all customers and the MCCC. The Managing Director advised Mr Thomas Dwyer appeared at an inquiry into nuclear power held in the Latrobe Valley and made representations that he spoke on behalf of the committee and customers. The MCCC had not discussed nor formed a position on the matter **and the comments made by Mr Dwyer were his own**. The Chair of the MCCC wrote to Mr Darren Chester and the ABC advising that the MCCC does not hold a view on the matter. Correspondence received back from Mr Darren Chester's Office noted the letter will be included in the formal minutes of the inquiry, ensuring the correct information is noted as part of the inquiry. Mr Drew expressed his disappointment that Mr Dwyer remained on the MCCC after he made incorrect representations.

Action	Action Officer	Due Date
Review item raised by Mr Vallance, and advise why a water entitlement is limited to a specific area of land	P. WINBANKS	14/02/2025

11. Meeting evaluation

The committee discussed the meeting, highlighting:

- whether there is a benefit to adding some time indications for guest speakers to give the committee an indication of how long agenda items are expected to run for.
- They appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback to SRW, and it was a constructive meeting. The way feedback was given and received was respectful.

12. Next meeting

The next meeting of the Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum will be held on Friday 2 May 2025 via MS Teams.

13. Close

With no further business the meeting was declared closed at 10:26am.

Item No: **5**
Subject: **Business arising from previous meetings**
Action: **For noting**
Author: **Hayley Taylor – Executive Assistant**
Date: **17/04/2025**

PURPOSE

1. To allow the forum to assess management progress on items identified for action from Southern Groundwater and River Forum meetings.

RECOMMENDATION: That the forum notes the status of business arising action items, including:

- one action item has been completed,
- one action item will remain open until the date of the Strategic Futures Forum has been confirmed, and
- one action items remain in progress.

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE CONSIDERATIONS

2. Business arising is considered each meeting.

BACKGROUND

3. Actions are captured in the minutes each month and transposed into risk wizard where base and aspirational dates are added along with the responsibility for completion.

REPORT

4. Attachment 5.1 describes each action item, its status, and a comment on its progress.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS - Southern GWR forum

Action progress: Complete

Action		Source	Due date	Completed date	Accountable officer	Status comment
35633	Review item raised by Mr Vallance, and advise why a water entitlement is limited to a specific area of land	SGRF meeting 56- 7 February 2024, Agenda Item 10 - General Business	14/02/25	05/03/25	Penny Winbanks	response provided 05/03/2025

Action progress: Due within 28 days

Action	Source	Due date	Completed date	Accountable officer	Status comment
35570	Develop communications on: • how to access Winterfill flows, • Educating and encouraging water trading with a focus on sleeper licences	SGRF meeting 55- 15 November 2024, Agenda Item 6.1 Roundtable discussion – regional highlights, issues and opportunities.	30/04/25	Penny Winbanks	Currently working with the Communications team to determine the best way to undertake this and get the word out to our customer base. Update on progress to date will be provided during the meeting.

Action progress: Future items (include a status comment when due date prior to next meeting)

Action	Source	Due date	Completed date	Accountable officer	Status comment
25330	Advise the SGRF of the date of the Strategic Futures Forum as soon as it is known.	SGRF meeting 51- 1 December 2023, Agenda Item 11 - Meeting evaluation	29/07/25	Hayley Taylor	Due date extended as date has not been confirmed. Action to remain open until date is confirmed, and SGRF notified.

Item No: **6.1**

Subject: **GM2030 Update**

Beth Ashworth, Director, Water Entitlements, Licensing and Groundwater, DEECA will join the meeting and provide an update on the GM2030 project.

Item No: **7.1**

Subject: **Rosters and Restrictions - process**

Russell Tomlin, Manager Groundwater and Rivers Operations and Compliance will join the meeting and provide an overview of the Rosters and Restrictions process, and discuss with the committee;

- Timing of information provided to customers,
 - Information provided, and
 - Would anything else be useful.
-

Item No: **7.2**

Subject: **Process improvements – Applications and Water Sales process**

Penny Winbanks, Manager Statutory Functions will discuss review of opportunities to streamline application processes.

Background

SRW have recently begun a process to review opportunities to streamline application processes, particularly where there is referral to agencies, and the potential for additional work to be completed by the applicant. The focus of the improvements identified to date are:

- Working with referral agencies to understand their needs so we can establish our processes around that.
- Clearly communicating expectations and requirements with applicants before they commit to the process.
- Maintain contact throughout the process by assigning case managers.
- Setting up clear and regular communication with key referral agencies throughout the process to ensure we have clear line of sight to progress when the actions are outside of our sphere of control.

Item No: 8.1

Subject: **Strategic Focus Areas and Groundwater and Rivers update**

Action: **For noting**

Author: **Penny Winbanks, Manager Statutory Functions**

Date: **10/042025**

Focus area	Commentary
Strategic focus 1. Continued advocacy for sustainable access to water for irrigators via the implementation of GM2030, policy reforms in surface water management and key stakeholder groups.	DEECA have been invited to this meeting to present on the purpose, process and progress of GM2030 We continue to work closely with DEECA on a review of Licensing guidelines that will replace the current Ministerial Policies for Managing Take and Use Licences, alongside yet to be finalised Licensing Regulations. Our aim is to ensure the guidance is practical, and minimises red tape for our customers where possible.
Strategic focus 2. Continue to encourage a flexible trading market through improved internal procedures and Government policies.	The groundwater trade platform has been opened up across SRWs whole area of operation, and to date there has been once successful trade match made in the WaDeLock GMA. In surfacewater areas, the rules around trading (no upstream trade, Sustainable Diversion Limits etc) make the process more difficult, therefore we continue to encourage interested parties to use the relevant Facebook page as a means of identifying other buyers and sellers. By the time of the meeting we will have issued letters to licence holders in and around the Orbost area reminding them that trading is an option and providing advice on how to trade water.
Strategic focus 3. Provide more real time information for customers on water usage following the integration of meter reading data with mySRW portal to improve decision making	Our work to improve our metering and data continues, and we are currently undertaking a tender assessment for the next stages of the capital mater replacement program. Within this we are exploring the best Automated Meter Reading devices with applications to better support customer access to data in real time. We intend on providing an update of the Metering Action Plan to this group at the next meeting in August.
Strategic focus 4. Undertake more detailed water resource assessment across our systems through investment of unregulated water sales funds and the continuation of the Supply/Demand projects.	No change from previous report. <i>We have initiated work to consolidate our understanding of how climate change may impact the reliability of water systems.</i> <i>This combined with findings from DEECAs Sustainable Yield project will help us identify critical focus points for investment.</i>

<p>Strategic focus 5.</p> <p>Understanding the implications of rapidly evolving cultural water policy on customer aspirations for improved access to water.</p>	<p>We have recently appointed a Cultural Liaison Officer to support us as we work to return water to Traditional Owners. Chris Sanders started work with us in early April.</p> <p>Having Chris on board will assist us to build relationships with the different RAPs across our area of operation and begin to build a bridge from where we are, to where we want to go. This will be informed by the principles that we have agreed with DEECA.</p>
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Issue	Commentary
Mitchell River: interest in water off the shelf	<p>A request for fees has been made, and once all fees are received SRW will work through the process.</p> <p>Each applicant has been provided with a letter that outlines the steps to ensure a licence determination can be made including relevant processes pertaining to IDPs. We require the applicant to agree to the process outlined before we proceed.</p> <p>We have also engaged early with the EGCMA and WGCMA to support a smooth process for our customers. Both the CMA and SRW have nominated case managers, so customers can contact that individual directly if they have questions or concerns at any point.</p>
South West EOI	<p>We are currently advertising for expressions of Interest in water from the deep aquifers of the south west – the Paarratte GMA and the Warrnambool Zone of the Dilwyn aquifer.</p> <p>The EOI opened in late March and is open until Friday 2 May. To date (10 April) we have not received any interest, however we have field enquiries.</p>
3-4 bench apportionment update	<p>SRW have been issued a Bulk Entitlement for 5.33GL for irrigators, which is a three way split with GLaWAC and the VEWB of the total 16GL available.</p> <p>We are now working to understand the product offering for our customers, and the licensing requirements for GLaWAC for their share.</p>
Metering update	<p>SRW are currently undertaking tender assessments for the upcoming round of the meter replacement program. Alongside this we are reviewing and updating our Metering Action Plan which will set our direction in terms of meter fleet, AMR (datalogger) fleet and data accessibility.</p> <p>With the addition of Jess Quinlivan, Metering and Data Lead, to the team, we are already making improvements to our meter reading processes to provide us surety of the condition of our assets, and ensuring overuse is properly managed and recorded.</p>

Issue	Commentary
Moorabool Catchment Investigation	Catchment investigation is in its final stages with a small number of inspection reports to finalise and review to determine potential enforcement actions including Section 151 Notice of Contravention and Section 78 & 80 Ministerial Directions.
Maribyrnong Catchment Investigation	Catchment investigation has commenced with communications sent to dam owners/occupants flagging upcoming dam inspections. Initial inspections are commencing in relation to PHD and waterway determinations. Any potential compliance issues identified may result in another inspection, drone surveillance and evidence gathering and potential enforcement actions including Section 151 Notice of Contravention and Section 78 & 80 Ministerial Directions.
Small Farm Dams Project	<p>The project is progressing well and we are likely to complete it within the timeframes and budget set.</p> <p>We recently held our second stakeholder group meeting with the next likely to be in around July or August, once the modelling work has been undertaken.</p>
Water for Traditional Owners	<p>We received applications from GLaWAC in late March and licences will be issued by the time we are meeting.</p> <p>We continue to work with GLaWAC to understand their aspirations around the water made available through the recent Bulk Entitlement decisions.</p> <p>We've had some really productive discussions with both Bunurong and Wadawurrung around licensing processes, and hope to receive applications from Bunurong in the near future.</p>
Mitchell River Management Review	<p>Due to resourcing pressures this Review has not progressed, however we remain committed to providing an opportunity to all licence holders via a survey to share their views with on the management of the Mitchell River.</p> <p>We hope to be able to circulate a survey shortly, we are currently requesting quotes from service providers.</p> <p>The purpose of the survey will be to understand what irrigators think is working , what's not and their views on some of the possible trade-offs required to improve how we management water in the Mitchell.</p>
Dry conditions in the Southwest	<p>SRW have presented information at a number of forums across the State now and this trend is continuing as it starts to dry off in other parts.</p> <p>The conditions in the South West continue to be very dry and domestic & stock users are the most at risk.</p>

Issue	Commentary
	<p>We are yet to see a marked increase in trade activity, however our field staff are certainly experiencing an increase in enquiries and requests for support.</p> <p>We continue to work with DEECA in the drought co-ordination group, and applications in the south west remain a priority for us</p>
Future of Orbost and District Project Irrigation Water Study	<p>We have responded to the future of Orbost and District (FoOD) Project via East Gippsland Shire Council, and provided advice to customers within the area about the value trading water, and information around the processes involved.</p>

Item No: 8.2
Subject: Communications and Engagement report – May 2025
Action: For noting
Author: Hayley Taylor, Executive Assistant
Date: 11/04/2025

PURPOSE

To update the Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum on recent communications and engagement activities.

RECOMMENDATION: The Committee note the report.

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE CONSIDERATIONS

2. Communications and engagement activity is reported at each meeting.

BACKGROUND

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

REPORT

4. Website

We publish stories on growers doing great things with groundwater and surface water and what we are doing to support access to groundwater.

<https://www.srw.com.au/news-media/thorpdale-potato-farmer-chipper-about-future>

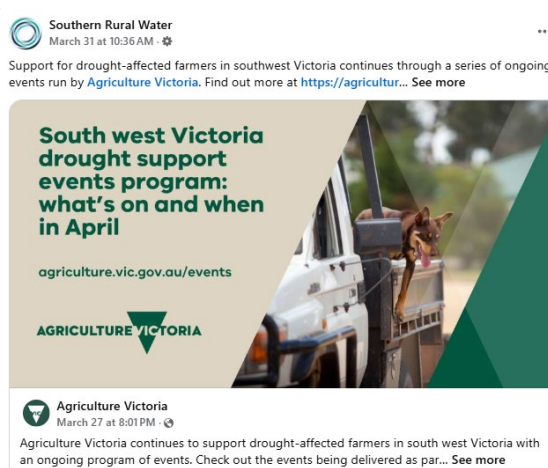
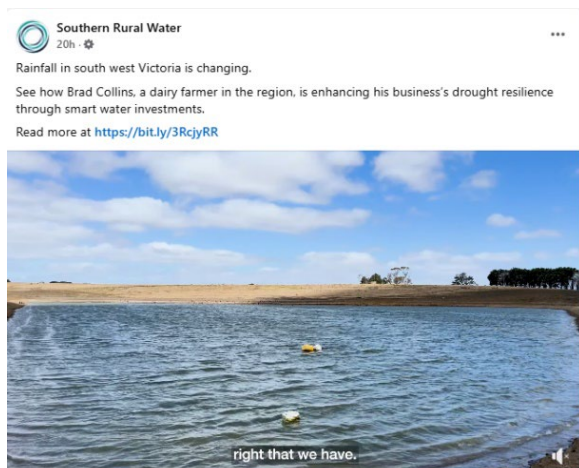
<https://www.srw.com.au/news-media/growing-show-stopping-choc-tops-groundwater>

<https://www.srw.com.au/news-media/online-groundwater-trade-room-open-all-customers>

<https://www.srw.com.au/news-media/complying-rules-your-responsibility>

5. Social media

Our social media posts about groundwater and rivers customers have received good responses. Below are examples of content since the last meeting. Please follow our social media pages to see more.



6. Advice, help and support for Customers

Since the last meeting, SRW has published social media posts and new articles on our Website, providing customers with information on reading water meetings, providing information on water rights and reminding customers of their obligations to keep their meter sites safe. The social media posts link customers to the SRW website for further information

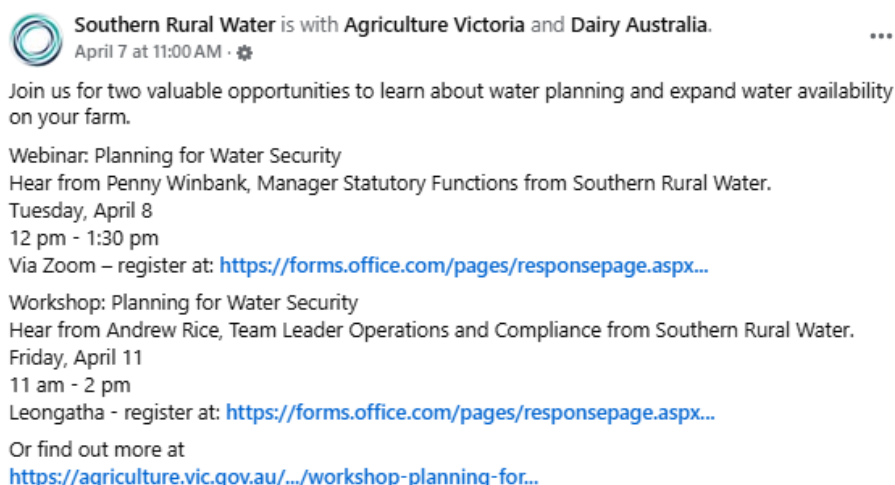
Keeping your meter site safe: <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/166mtkQjbR/>

How water rights work in Victoria: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/14iYoNbT1g/>

Keeping track of water usage: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1Qi9YyWqky/>

7. Promoting events

SRW promotes events including webinars and workshops via our social media channels that may be of interest or provide assistance to customers. In April 2025, SRW join Agriculture Victoria in a webinar and workshop to discuss water planning and expanding water availability on farm. Please follow our social media pages to see more upcoming events.



Item No: **9.1**

Subject: **Cultural Awareness Training**

Penny Winbanks, Manager Statutory Functions, will facilitate Cultural Awareness Training for the Committee.

Item No: **9.2**

Subject: **Important issues from other customer committees**

Cameron FitzGerald, Managing Director, will provide a verbal update on important issues raised at other customer committees.

Item No: **9.3**

Subject: **Matters referred to the board/board committee.**

Dr Jane Doolan, Board Director will discuss matters that will be referred to the Board.

Item No: **9.4**

Subject: **2025 Committee workplan**

Southern Rural Water will provide updates to the committee as indicated in the 2025 Committee workplan. Additional items can be added to the agenda at the request of committee members and by SRW to address any current issues or events.

During meetings, the committee can request that items are added to the workplan to ensure that updates on specific topics are provided at key intervals.

The workplan will be included as an agenda item for each meeting.

A copy of the 2025 Committee workplan is included as attachment 9.4.1 for **noting**.

SOUTHERN GROUNDWATER AND RIVERS FORUM ROLLING WORK PLAN

		2025				2026				
	Requirement	FEB	MAY	AUG	NOV	FEB	MAY	AUG	NOV	Notes
Principal & Business Matters	Communications report	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	GWR Strategic Focus Areas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Report on progress each meeting as part of the Manager GWR update. Update Focus Area's each May.
	Plan for new Financial Year			✓				✓		Plan to address Key Focus Areas
	Groundwater and Rivers Update	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Brief paragraph to update to committee on current projects and issues
Policy and strategic direction	Committee appointments			✓				✓		As required. (Chair and Deputy Chair vote)
	Compliance and Enforcement			✓				✓		EOFY performance
	Climate Outlook and Drought Response Update				✓				✓	
	Corporate Plan	✓		✓		✓		✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> February – Discussion – what does the SGRF want to see in the Corporate Plan. Align with GWR Strategic Focus Areas August – Corporate Plan (new plan for noting)
Project updates (DEECA and SRW)	SWS 4.13 – Small Farm Dams									At key project milestones
	GM2030									At key project milestones
Admin / Other	Meeting evaluation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Important issues from other customer committees	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	MD to provide verbal update
	Matters referred to the committee by the board/board committee	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Committee Workplan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Meeting schedule for the year				✓				✓	

Item No: **10**

Subject: **General Business**

The Chair will introduce any items of general business.

Item No: **11**

Subject: **Meeting evaluation**

The Chair will seek feedback on the effectiveness of this meeting.

The Chair will ask the forum to assess the performance of the committee at this meeting, using the below questions as a guide.

1. Do we think the committee is adding value?
 2. What's working?
 3. What's not working?
-

Item No: **12**

Subject: **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum is to be held on Friday 1 August 2025, via MS Teams.

Item No: **13**

Subject: **Close**

The Chair will close the meeting.
