

Macalister Customer Consultative Committee

Minutes of Meeting 207

Date	Time	Location
27 May 2025	10:00am	SRW Maffra Depot

Present

Mr Benn Thexton	Committee Chair
Ms Kate Lamb	Committee Member
Mr Christopher Van Den Dikkenberg	Committee Member
Mr Tim Missen	Committee Member
Mr Warrick Purdon	Committee Member
Mr Bernard Coleman	Committee Member
Mr Brad White	Committee Member

In Attendance

Mr Cameron FitzGerald	Managing Director, SRW (for part)
Mr Matt Cook	Manager Water Supply East, SRW
Ms Hayley Taylor	Executive Assistant, SRW (minutes)

Guests

Christopher Sanders	Cultural Liaison Officer
Peter Hahnemann	Project Manager Macalister Fresh

Apologies

Mr Simon Wilkinson	General Manager Service Delivery, SRW
Mr Mark Coleman	Committee Member
Mr James Clyne	Committee 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.

The Chair **noted** the apology letter provided by Mr Thomas Dwyer, in relation to the comments he made at the Nuclear Power Generation forum in December 2024. The committee was advised Mr Dwyer will also complete governance training provided by SRW, prior to the next meeting. Management advised the governance training will be rolled out to the whole committee at a future date.

Mr Simon Wilkinson, Mr James Clyne and Mr Mark Coleman submitted their apologies. Mr Cameron FitzGerald, Managing Director attended the meeting online due to attending a drought forum in Warrnambool, and advised he will need to leave the meeting at 11:25am.

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 206

The minutes of meeting 206 were **approved**.

Moved: Chris Van Den Dikkenberg **Second:** Kate Lamb

5. Business Arising

The report was taken as read and status comments noted.

6. PROJECT CONSULTATION

6.1 Macalister Fresh Consultation

Mr Peter Hahnemann, Project Manager Macalister Fresh, provided the committee with an overview of SRW's Macalister Fresh project highlighting:

- Information from the project Customer Reference Group meetings held in 2024, have been collated to inform the vision and project success factors for the region.
- For the past 6-months, SRW has been using the outcomes from the Customer Reference Group to identify and develop response options and pathways.
- SRW has recently met with DEECA and the National Water Grid to discuss the project.

- The greater vision and the benefits identified in discussions with the Stakeholder Reference Group include Regional growth, benefits to all irrigators, water savings, network rationalisation, automated network, climate adaptation and all year water supply. Macalister Fresh is creating a long-term vision that will help inform how smaller interventions will be rolled out into the future.
The committee discussed the big picture of Macalister Fresh in delivering water to other area's in the region, utilising Blue Rock, linking pipelines to the Mitchell River, building another dam above Glenmaggie.
- The aim of the consultation with the committee is to seek feedback on the options, and the criticality of what matters to customers and the community.

The committee discussed reports from irrigators that they were waiting for 10 days to have a water delivery to fill a dam. Management discussed the potential for a dashboard that would help irrigators identify gaps in demand whereby they would place an order, rather than waiting.

The Chair provided feedback on the availability of Low Reliability Water (LRW) and commented that SRW had not shown that current irrigators how they would have a more reliable water supply and better quality service, if the district was to be expanded.

The committee discussed the allocation of LRW during the season, and availability of water during the season. Management provided a summary of how the Allocation Model calculates available water to be allocated as LRW.

The Managing Director inquired as to the appetite of customers to trade water during the season to benefit from the water that would otherwise not be utilised. The committee discussed the barriers to trading which include monetary, and customers waiting for LRW allocation.

Upon inquiry management advised the research indicates 7GL of High Reliability Water would be required for 20 new customers if the district was to be expanded. The committee discussed how water would be made available to new customers. A key factor to current irrigators accepting an expansion to the district will be explaining the concept to expanding water availability. The Managing Director reiterated that the project would not proceed if current demand within the district cannot be met, and current customers receive an improved system. The opportunity the proposal considers, is having a wider customer base to support system improvements and ensure a reliable water supply into the future.

The Chair reiterated SRW must show irrigators that there is more water available than what current customers can use.

Mr Hahneemann reiterated that the mantra of the project has been, since inception, that the current district is no worse off.

Mr Hahneemann discussed options considered to improve service and increase capacity which could include balancing storages, and look at "near-term", lower cost

interventions that could be implemented to improve service that could address the immediate needs of customers.

The Committee reiterated that providing information on the vision and long-term plan of Macalister Fresh will be a key communication piece to inform customers as to why certain options are being considered. The committee recommended highlighting power savings and other benefits that could be realised by the installation of a piped, pressurised system as part of consultation could be constructive.

7. TRAINING

7.1 Cultural Awareness Training

Mr Christopher Sanders joined the meeting and provided the committee Cultural Awareness Training. The training covered:

- Reconciliation at SRW
- Impacts felt by Traditional Owners
- Traditional Owner Groups in SRW's service area
- Stolen Generation and Intergenerational Trauma
- Difference between and Acknowledgement to Country and Welcome to Country and recognising Traditional Owners.
- Traditional Owner Access to Water Roadmap
- The commitment from the Water Sector
- Cultural Safety, and what it means to be culturally safe.
- Barriers faced by Traditional Owners today

8. PRINCIPLE MATTERS – FOR DISCUSSION

8.1 Water Supply East Update

Mr Matthew Cook, Manager Water Supply East provided an update on the season to date, highlighting:

- Demand during the season was better than last season, but SRW are still looking at ways to improve delivery timing.
- Water Sales results
- Capital work program to fix Tunnel Five and automated outlet program. Outlets being upgraded are prioritised on volume used.
- New role of Manager Strategic Projects and Service Optimisation.

The committee discussed weeds in channels and the winter maintenance works being completed to clean channels including the third year of a trial of the PayLoad product.

9. PRINCIPAL MATTERS – FOR NOTING

9.1 Communication Report

The report was taken as read.

10. COMMITTEE MATTERS

10.1 Roundtable discussion

Due to time constraints the Chair opened the discussion to contributions from members rather than a roundtable format discussion.

Mr Missen reiterated the comments during the Macalister Fresh discussion regarding water in the weir at the end of a relatively dry season. The committee discussed how the model could be altered with other trigger points included, that could make more water available earlier in the season.

10.2 Important issues from other customer committees

The agenda item was not discussed

10.3 Matter referred by/to the Board/Board Committee.

The agenda item was not discussed

10.4 2025 meeting schedule

The committee **accepted** the 2025 meeting schedule with no amendments.

11. GENERAL BUSINESS

The following items were raised by members:

Private works – drain crossings – Mr Cook provided an overview of SRW's requirements in regard to private works on or around SRW infrastructure. Customer's wanting to complete works are required to abide by SRW requirements. SRW encourages customers to talk to SRW prior to starting works and obtain an agreement to ensure all parties understand and agree to their responsibilities. The committee inquired as to the dispute resolution process, and were advised customers can contract the Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria.

Allocation of Low Reliability Water – discussed during agenda item 6.1.

The Chair raised an issue in regard to SRW communicating requirements to transfer water allocation between bores. Mr Cook **agreed** to take the question on notice and discuss with the Manager Statutory Functions.

Action	Action Officer	Due Date
Discuss feedback received from the Chair with Manager Statutory Functions, in regard to SRW communicating requirements to transfer water allocation between bores	M. COOK	28/06/2025

12. Meeting evaluation

With the meeting running over time, this agenda item was not discussed.

13. Next meeting

The next meeting of the Macalister Customer Consultative Committee is scheduled for Tuesday 26 August 2025 at SRW's Maffra Office.

14. Close

With no further business the meeting was declared closed at 12:29pm.