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Southern Rural Water

Macalister Customer Consultative Committee

Agenda and Papers
Meeting No.211

Tuesday 19 May 2026

9:00am - Dethridge Meeting Room
SRW Maffra Depot

Document Set ID: 1803919
Version: 1, Version Date: 01/09/2026

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We acknowledge the Gunaikurnai people - the Traditional Owners of this land on which we meet - and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present

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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.**

Macalister Customer Consultative Committee

Meeting No.211

Date	Time	Location
Tuesday 19 May 2026	9am – 11am	Dethridge Room - SRW Depot 185 Johnson Street, Maffra 3860

Attending	
MCCC Members	Mr Benn Thexton - Chair Mr Christopher Van Den Dikkenberg - Deputy Chair Mr Bernard Coleman Mr Brad White Mr James Clyne Ms Kate Lamb Ms Jessica Knight Ms Ingrid Biram Mr Thomas Dwyer Mr Tim Missen Mr Warrick Purdon
SRW Executive	Mr Scott Cornish - Managing Director Ms Penny Winbanks - Acting GM Strategy People & Culture Ms Rachel Lunn - GM Service Delivery
SRW Board	Ms Claire Miller - Director
SRW Strategy and Policy *Strategy People & Culture - SP&C*	Mr Craig Smith - Manager Business Planning and Strategy Mr Terry Flynn - Manager Water Resource Strategy
SRW Day-to-Day Operations *Service Delivery*	Ms Renee Wicks - Manager Water Supply (MID and WID) Mr Matt Cook - Acting Manager Groundwater & Rivers
Apologies	
MCCC Member	Mr Mark Coleman

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Agenda

		Topic		
MEETING OPENING AND STANDARD MATTERS				
1		Acknowledgement of County	*Chair*	9:00am
2		Welcome and Apologies	*Chair*	9:05am
	2.1	Introductions - round table for all attendees	*Chair*	
	2.2	Introduction - Scott Cornish, SRW Managing Director	*Chair* *Scott Cornish*	9:10am
3		Declaration of conflicts of interest	*All*	9.20am
4		Confirmation of Minutes: Meetings 210	*Chair*	9.25am
	4.1	*Attachment – Minutes Meeting No.210 – 24 February 2026*		
	4.2	*Attachment – Business Arising from previous meetings*		
5		For Noting: Communications Report	*Chair*	9.27am
	5.1	*Attachment – Communications Report: May 2026*		
BUSINESS PLANNING, STRATEGY AND FUTURES				
6	6.1	Current Price Determination Performance Reporting	*Craig Smith*	9.30am
	6.2	FY2026-27 Corporate Plan and Pricing Submission	*Craig Smith*	9.40am
	6.3	MID Strategic Futures – Macalister Fresh and Allocations Policy	*Terry Flynn*	9.50am
MCCC GOVERNANCE AND FEEDBACK				
7	7.1	Purpose of the MCCC – what are the views on the *Current Purpose* from the current Committee Handbook?	*Rachel Lunn*	10.20am
	7.2	Frequency of MCCC meetings in FY2026-27	*Rachel Lunn*	10.25am
	7.3	Building future agendas – what would you like to see, keep, start and stop in FY2026-27?	*Rachel Lunn*	

	OPERATIONAL, DAY-TO-DAY SERIVCES			
8	8.1	Allocations FY2026-27 – documenting our current state	*Renee Wicks*	10.30am
	8.2	Open table discussion - what worked well and what didn't in the 2025-26 Operational Season?	*Renee Wicks*	10:50am
	MEETING CLOSURE			
9		Round Table – any other matters	*Chair*	10:50am
10		Meeting evaluation	*Chair*	10:55am
11		Next meeting – Tuesday 25 August 2026	*Chair*	10:57am
12		Close	*Chair*	11.00am

Appendices – Discretionary Reading and Reference		*Agenda Ref*
1	SRW Customer Consultative Committee Handbook	Item 7.1
2	MCCC Rolling Workplan	Item 7.3
3	**For Noting Only** - MID Drainage Draft Decision-Making Framework *Salinity management in the Macalister Irrigation District*	N/A

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: **2.1**

Subject: **Introduction of meeting attendees**

The Chair and Rachel Lunn (SRW) will introduce the new attendees at the meeting, including the newly appointed Committee members.

Item No: **2.2**

Subject: **Introduction – Scott Cornish**

Scott Cornish will address the Committee as the newly appointed Managing Director of SRW.

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.

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Item No: **4**

Subject: **Confirmation of Minutes – Meeting 210**

Action: **For approval**

Author: **Lauren Gourlay – Executive Assistant**

Date: **13/02/2026**

PURPOSE

1. To ensure that the minutes taken of committee meeting 210 are an accurate and sufficient record of discussions held and decisions made at the meeting.

RECOMMENDATION: That the committee **approves** the minutes of Meeting 210 held on Tuesday 24 February 2026.

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 210, held at the SRW Maffra office on Tuesday 24 February 2026 are provided in attachment 4.1.

5. **Budget impac**t: Nil

6. **Link to strategy:** Nil.

7. **Risk:** Committee meeting minutes are a public record and may be subject to release under Freedom of Information. Members 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 Rural Water

Macalister Customer Consultative Committee

Minutes of Meeting 210

Date	Time	Location
Tuesday 24 February 2026	10:00am	SRW Maffra Office

Present - MCCC	
Mr Christopher Van Den Dikkenberg	Committee Member (stand in Chair)
Mr Bernard Coleman	Committee Member
Mr Brad White	Committee Member
Mr Mark Coleman	Committee Member
Mr Thomas Dwyer	Committee Member
Mr Warrick Purdon	Committee Member
Ms Kate Lamb	Committee Member
Mr Tim Missen	Committee Member
Present - SRW	
Ms Rachel Lunn	General Manager Service Delivery
Mr Scott Cornish	Acting Managing Director
Mr Matt Cook	Manager Strategic Projects and Service Optimisation
Ms Renee Wicks	Manager Water Supply East
Ms Claire Miller	Board Director
Mrs Lauren Gourlay	Executive Assistant, SRW (minutes - online)
Guests - SRW	
Mr Craig Smith	Manager, Strategy & Business Planning
Ms Joanne Faggian	Communications and Engagement Advisor
Ms Penny Winbanks	Acting General Manager, Strategy People & Culture
Apologies	
Mr Benn Thexton	Committee Chair
Mr James Clyne	Committee Member
Mr Russell Tomlin	Manager, Groundwater & Rivers Operations/Compliance

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1. Acknowledgement of County

The meeting was opened at 10:13am.

Mr Chris Van Den Dikkenberg opened the meeting and, as the interim Chair for the meeting, 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 formal apologies. The Chair reconfirmed he would be sitting in the role temporarily in the absence of Mr Benn Thexton, who was a late apology to the meeting.

Those who were in attendance for the first time introduced themselves to the wider group – Claire Miller, SRW Board Director and Scott Cornish, Acting MD.

The Chair and Ms Rachel Lunn explained the purpose of the shift in agenda structure and discussed the meeting held with available members in January 2026.

Recognising the feedback received from committee members, the agenda has been reshaped to address the formalities of the committee at the beginning of the meeting, an operational and strategic update and then a round table discussion to address key issues and a bolstered commitment to bring the right people into the room when those questions are asked.

The committee agreed the renewed pathway is worth trialling to better the communications and conversations between the committee and SRW.

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 209

The minutes of meeting 209 were **approved.**

Moved: Tim Missen **Second:** Bernard Coleman

5. Business Arising

The report was taken as read and status comments noted.

Outstanding actions were addressed:

- The consideration for a working group has been put on hold due to the recruitment of an MD.

The committee recognised the closed actions and accepted the notes taken to close out the actions.

Southern Rural Water

The committee then noted the intent behind the suggestion of a working group is primarily to meet more often than the MCCC does to address any issues that may arise in between the formal quarterly meeting dates.

The committee discussed the benefit of immediacy of the working group – Ms Claire Miller agreed that a working group can be very beneficial for both parties as the conversations can recognise and solve a problem in a more effective and efficient way and then be reported back to the quarterly meeting.

The committee agreed to revise the action on the Business Arising list to reflect the conversation and close it out; further to this, the request was to create a new action addressing the establishment of a working group with members and SRW staff.

Action	Action Officer	Due Date
Establish a working group and create a schedule of meetings within a month of Meeting 210 and prior to the next scheduled MCCC Meeting (211)	M. COOK R. WICKS R. LUNN	31/03/2026

6. Communication Report

The Committee noted the Communications report submitted as part of the meeting pack – the report was accepted.

7. COMMITTEE MATTERS - UPDATES

7.1 Matters from other Committees

Ms Lunn noted the recent Southern Groundwater & Rivers Forum (SGRF) meeting that was held in early February 2026 and the conversations in that meeting reflect the same conversations held and heard – that with the pricing submission coming up, the issues faced will inform SRW's approach to the process and the ESC.

Ms Lunn also noted there is a heavy conversation lean towards policy and business planning and that SRW has recognised this requirement and that the Strategy Team will be involved in the planning and engagement of these sessions.

The committee noted that there haven't been regular updates from other committees at the last few meetings and would like to see this as a standing agenda item for future meetings.

7.2 Matters from the Board

Mr Scott Cornish noted the primary discussions for the Board have been around the strategy, recognising the previous one was written several years ago and that is due for a refresh.

Mr Cornish also noted there has been a lot of preparatory work over the last few months for the pricing submission and corporate plan. Ms Lunn noted that there will be a presentation for the committee further into the meeting.

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The Chair recognised the work of former Managing Director Cameron FitzGerald and acknowledged the effort Cameron always made to listen and take the time to address and discuss any concerns with the community. Mr Cornish agreed that he has left a great legacy for the next Managing Director to uphold and continue.

The committee queried the recruitment process of the Managing Director – Mr Cornish and Ms Miller confirmed the process is underway and shortlisting of candidates will commence in a couple of weeks.

8. SRW UPDATES - STRATEGIC DISCUSSIONS

8.1 Corporate Plan and Pricing Submission

Craig Smith and Jo Faggian joined the room at 11:10am to present on the Pricing Submission and the Corporate Plan process and preparatory works to date.

Ms Penny Winbanks joined the meeting at 11:27am to support the conversations in her new role as Acting General Manager, Strategy People & Culture.

The committee noted the concept of bronze-silver-gold service and how this would be part of the engagement. Mr Smith noted it is the first iteration of this language, and the concept of layered service will form the basis of the pricing submission conversations with customers and help determine how we scope the plan to approach the ESC with our submission.

Craig and Jo thanked the Committee for their time and left the meeting at 11:46am

9. SRW UPDATES - OPERATIONAL MATTERS

9.1 Water Supply East Update

Members from the Water Supply East (WSE) team joined the meeting at 11:50am for a meet and greet with committee members over a light lunch.

Ms Renee Wicks presented a visual WSE update in addition to the paper that was provided in the meeting pack. Ms Wicks showed some videos and photos of the initiatives happening throughout the district to ensure supply continues at an optimal level.

Ms Lunn recognised the work of all involved – both customer and operational teams – and their willingness to be open about issues and work together to find a resolution. The committee noted the hard work of the team does not go unnoticed and they are thankful for their efforts across the board.

The WSE team members thanked the committee for their time and left the meeting at 12:14pm.

9.2 Operations & Compliance East Update

Mr Russell Tomlin was an apology for the meeting; however, an update paper was prepared and provided for the meeting pack for the Committee to read.

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10. COMMITTEE MATTERS

10.1 Recruitment Update

Mr Matt Cook provided an update on the recruitment process – all members have renominated or confirmed they will see out the terms of their current appointment.

A formal paper will be prepared for the next SRW Board meeting, scheduled for the end of March, at which the recommendations for the consultative committees will be reviewed.

If the recruitment recommendations are accepted by the Board, it will take the total of the MCCC to 12 representatives.

Ms Lunn also noted an overall update on customer consultative committee conversations will be provided to the Board at the March meeting.

10.2 Customer Consultative Committee Handbook

Ms Lunn noted agenda items 10.2 and 10.3 are interconnected and will recognise the engagement with stakeholders. There have been discussions on how the engagement over the course of the next twelve months through the pricing submission process may inform and refresh the committee handbook.

However, Ms Lunn confirmed the handbook in its current state remains as is and is the framework for how both the MCCC and the SGRF are conducted.

10.3 Strategic Stakeholder Engagement Framework

Ms Lunn reiterated the previous point discussed for item 10.2

11. Round Table – Any Other Matters

The committee discussed the water that was recently sold at a significantly higher price at the commencement of the season and the high reliability/low reliability availability determination.

The committee noted the layered effect of the information that determines the price of water – Ms Lunn noted there may be some gaps in the information around the trading options and how prices are determined.

Ms Lunn requested the committee reach out to those farmers who have issues with the process and ask them to contact SRW. Further, Ms Lunn noted this is the conversation that would be beneficial for the pricing submission preparation and could form the basis of significant strategic work for the organisation.

The committee then noted the discrepancy of meters on the Newry Pipeline and the water flows and wastage. There was note of other conversations with customers and the daytime vs nighttime flow.

Ms Lunn noted this is the sort of conversation that could be addressed in the working group that everyone is keen to establish.

12. Meeting evaluation

The Chair invited members to ask any further questions of the SRW attendees and if there were any issues with how the meeting was conducted and the reshaping of the agenda.

The committee noted the better part of the conversations were held in the back end of the meeting and would like it to be brought forward. This may also be resolved with the implementation of the working group.

The committee asked if there was any discussion around the use of drones for weed spraying along the channels. Ms Lunn noted this is another discussion for the working group but committed to including this as an item on the agenda for the first meeting.

Ms Lunn and the committee both noted and agreed that the conversation at the formal quarterly meetings needs to focus more on a round table discussion and keep updates to a minimum.

13. Next meeting

The next meeting of the Macalister Customer Consultative Committee is scheduled for Tuesday 26 February 2026 at SRW's Maffra Office.

14. Close

With no further business the meeting was declared closed at 12:55pm.

Item No: **5**

Subject: **Business arising from previous meetings**

Action: **For noting**

Author: **Lauren Gourlay – Executive Assistant**

Date: **15/05/2026**

PURPOSE

1. To allow the forum to assess management progress on items identified for action from Macalister Customer Consultative Committee meetings.

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

- **One** action remains 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.

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BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS - MCCC

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
65816	Discuss option for a temporary working group with key customers that have raised issues. Develop improvement plans to bring to next scheduled committee meeting.	Macalister Customer Consultative Committee - 25 November 2025 - Agenda Item 7 Updates and Information Sharing	30/06/26		Matt Cook, Rachel Lunn	Update 30/03/26 - due to the recruitment of a new MD, this action is on hold. Due date extended to end of March and will be reviewed prior to the Q2 meeting. Update 01/05/2026 - the concept of a monthly operational working group will be discussed at Meeting 211 (May 2026).

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Item No: **6.1**

Subject: **Communications and Engagement report – May 2026**

Action: **For noting**

Author: **Lauren Gourlay - Executive Assistant**

Date: **11/05/2026**

PURPOSE

To update the Macalister Customer Consultative Committee 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

Southern Rural Water has produced a range of website content for the Macalister area. There has also been updates on activity at the recreational areas, information on current projects and regular updates on the seasonal conditions.

https://www.srw.com.au/news-media/water-auction-macalister-irrigation-district-28-may

https://www.srw.com.au/news-media/needle-valve-works-lake-glenmaggie-what-you-need-know

https://www.srw.com.au/news-media/seasonal-outlook-reviewing-conditions-and-looking-ahead

5. Advice, help and support for customers and farmers

SRW continues to publish social media content and new articles on our platforms that provide customers with information on support services including technical, financial and wellbeing. The social media posts link customers to the SRW website for further information.

6. Social media

Our social media posts continue to receive good response rates. Below are examples of content since the last meeting. Please follow our social media pages to see more.

Southern Rural Water
April 24 at 7:45 AM ·

Did you know some of Australia's most prized wines start with limestone soils?

At Lightfoot Wines, the vineyard sits on rare "terra rossa over limestone," a foundation known for producing exceptional fruit.

The vines themselves are nurtured by Mitchell River water that we regulate and provide access to through licencing.

By capturing winter flows from the Mitchell River, storing it on farm, and using efficient irrigation when it matters most, the Lightfoot crew turn great soil and smart water use into award-winning wines.

Read more at https://www.srw.com.au/.../turning-water-wine-mitchell-river See less

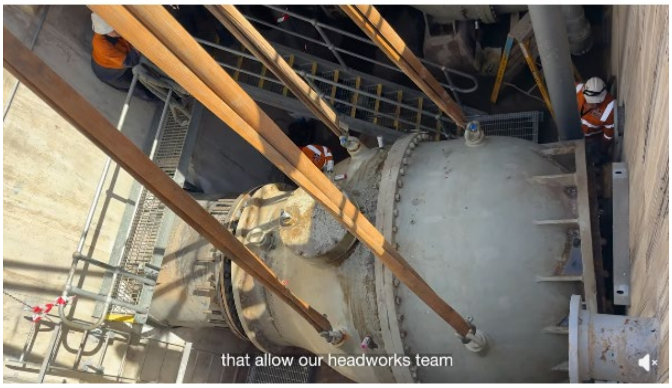
Southern Rural Water
April 23 at 10:27 AM ·

Big works underway at Lake Glenmaggie.

We're refurbishing one of the dam's needle valves that helps control water flow into the Main Southern Channel.

This essential maintenance ensures the needle valve remains in good working order and we can continue supporting irrigation across the Macalister Irrigation District.

Check out the works 👇 See less



Southern Rural Water is with **Maffra & Districts Landcare Network** and **2 others**.
March 2 ·

We helped clean up Lake Glenmaggie with the Heyfield Adventure Hub, Maffra & Districts Landcare Network and local volunteers. While things have got better, there was still far too much trash to tidy up. We spoke with Estelle Kayler Thomson from Heyfield Adventure Hub about what Clean Up Australia means to the community and why every little bit of litter picked up and disposed of properly makes a big difference to our waterways.

👉Read more at https://www.srw.com.au/.../supporting-healthy-waterways... See less

Southern Rural Water
February 26 ·

We're making good progress with our meter replacement program and have replaced 101 old-style water meters with modern ones. We're planning to upgrade the remaining 900 by the end of 2026.

The new digital meters will enable:
💧More accurate water readings
💧Fairer water use
💧Better on-farm irrigation planning
💧Stronger water resource management

Read more about the program and how you can help us ensure a smooth installation: https://www.srw.com.au/.../one-meter-time-our-upgrade... See less

Southern Rural Water
March 19 ·

At Metung Hot Springs, geothermal water rises naturally from underground and flows straight into the pools at around 40 degrees.

Because of its natural temperature, very little extra water is needed to cool it down.

Once it's finished flowing through the pools, the water is reused to irrigate the nearby golf course making sure this natural resource keeps supporting the landscape around it.

A great example of thoughtful water management.

Read more at https://www.srw.com.au/.../groundwater-makes-metung-mecca... See less

Southern Rural Water
April 9 ·

We're heading to the 2026 Gippsland Irrigation Expo MAY 20 Sale Showgrounds.

Whether you want to soak up knowledge on supply in the district or dive into the big questions about rural water in southern Victoria, our team will be there to talk with you.

Grab your free tickets at https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/.../gippsland-irrigation-expo

Looking forward to seeing you there.

📍 Sale Showgrounds
📅 Wednesday, 20 May 2026
⏰ 9am - 4pm See less

Item No: **6.1**

Subject: **Price determination performance reporting**

Craig Smith will provide an overview of the current price determination performance reporting.

Item No: **6.2**

Subject: **SRW 2026/27 Corporate Plan and Price Submission**

Craig Smith will present an update on the SRW Corporate Plan for 2026/27 and the current Price Submission engagement.

Item No: **6.3**

Subject: **MID Strategic Futures – Macalister Fresh and Allocations Policy**

Terry Flynn will provide the committee an update on the Macalister Fresh Strategy and Rachel Lunn will discuss the allocations policy.

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Item No: **7.1**

Subject: **Purpose of the MCCC – Customer Committee Handbook Review**

Rachel Lunn will consult with the Committee on the current Customer Committee Handbook and the *Current Purpose* as described.

A copy of the *SRW Customer Committee Handbook* can be read in Appendix 1.

Item No: **7.2**

Subject: **MCCC Meetings in 2026/27**

Rachel Lunn will discuss the schedule of meetings for 2026/27 and consult with the Committee on frequency of meetings and alternative options.

MCCC Meetings are held on the last Tuesday of each quarter in the calendar year – traditionally February, May, August and November.

The remaining meetings of 2026 are in calendars for:

- Tuesday 25 August
- Tuesday 24 November

Item No: **7.3**

Subject: **Building Future Agendas**

Rachel Lunn will consult with the Committee on building future agendas that address Committee interest and SRW organisational updates.

For reference, a copy of the previously used *MCCC Rolling Work Plan* can be read in Appendix 2

Item No: **8.1**

Subject: **Allocations in 2026/27**

Renee Wicks will discuss with input from the Committee documenting the current state of allocations and the approach for 2026/27

Item No: **8.2**

Subject: **Open table discussion – Operational Season 2025/26**

Renee Wicks will lead an open table discussion on the 2025/26 operational season and review what worked and what improvement can be implemented in the 2026/27 season.

Item No: **9**

Subject: **General Business**

The Chair will introduce any items of general business and open the round table for discussion.

Item No: **10**

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: **11**

Subject: **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Macalister Customer Consultative Committee is scheduled for Tuesday 25 August 2026 – to be held in person at the SRW Maffra Office.

Item No: **12**

Subject: **Close**

The Chair will close the meeting.

Appendices

Discretionary Reading - MCCC

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Customer Consultative Committee Handbook

December 2023

Contents

About SRW

Southern Rural Water (SRW) is a water corporation created under the Water Act 1989 (Vic). SRW is governed by a skills-based board of directors appointed by the Minister for Water, apart from the Managing Director, who is appointed by the non-executive directors.

SRW has approximately 170 staff based in offices across the state. SRW's main offices are in Maffra, Mitcham, Werribee and Warrnambool. SRW also has field offices in Colac, Merrimu and the Latrobe Valley.

Further information is available at www.srw.com.au.

SRW has two customer consultative committees.

- Macalister Customer Consultative Committee (MCCC)
- Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum (SGRF)

This handbook has been prepared to assist committee members in their work.

SRW Engagement approach

SRW formally engages with its customers and stakeholders in the following ways:

Strategic

- Strategic Futures Group (Advisory Group)

  A broad group covering customers, community and stakeholder interests on agribusiness, water access, licensing, compliance and environmental opportunities.

- Reference Groups

  Customer reference groups provide an important feedback mechanism for customers, in particular, when major change proposals could impact customers.

- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and partnerships

  SRW has MoU's in place with Great South Coast Food and Fibre, Gippsland Environmental Agencies (GEA) and the Werribee Growers Co-operative (through the Werribee Reconfiguration Reference Group).

Operational

- Customer Consultative Committees

  Two customer committees have been formed - the Macalister Customer Consultative Committee and the Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum. These are advisory committees and seek to ensure customers have a clear voice on how SRW delivers its services.

- Wyndham City Council/Green Wedge Forum

  Southern Rural Water attends all, and presents regularly at, the Wyndham City Council Green Wedge Forum. This provides us with an opportunity to enhance our partnership with the Council while achieving improved irrigator engagement.

- Bacchus Marsh: Drop-in sessions

  Southern Rural Water hosts drop-in sessions in Bacchus Marsh twice a year. These sessions are hosted by our Service Delivery team and project managers and provide an opportunity for customers to talk to SRW staff.

- Field Days
  - Great South Coast Food & Fibre host an annual water forum. SRW attend this forum which provides a valuable opportunity to support our customers.
  - Farmworld Lardner Park Field Day sees large numbers of customers from the east in attendance. SRW has a presence at this field day, proactively engaging with customers on water issues and opportunities.

The following diagram maps SRW's proposed activities across our service area.

Purpose of Customer Consultative Committees

SRW appoints customer consultative committees on the basis that they have an advisory role and are representative of customer views. Committee membership provides an opportunity to have input into SRW's decision-making process with a focus on ensuring SRW remains focussed on delivering the value customers expect.

The purpose of SRW's customer consultative committees is to:

- provide advice to SRW in implementing programs and services,
- participate in the SRW decision-making process, including during the preparation of Price Submissions and annual corporate plans, by providing feedback to the board on matters relevant to the business and associated with that customer committee,
- assist SRW in better understanding the issues facing customers and their current and future expectations, and
- assist SRW in improving relationships with customers.

Business planning at SRW

SRW's approach to business planning

The Price Submission (every five years) sets out SRW's overall strategic and financial framework and is approved by the Essential Service Commission (ESC).

SRW's Corporate Plan is based on the financial year. It specifies budgets, prices and performance measures for the coming year and is submitted to both the Minister and Treasurer on 30 April each year.

Customer committees are consulted on initiatives and actions that are being considered for inclusion of these plans.

Committees will track progress and provide advice on initiatives and works arising from SRW's Price Submission and Corporate Plan. This includes:

- receiving operational performance reports, including salinity management;
- reviewing potential new initiatives; and
- reports on scheduled significant capital works.

SRW will set an annual work plan for each committee to ensure both SRW and the committees meet their responsibilities.

Membership

All customer consultative committee members must be a customer or nominated representative of the Macalister Irrigation District and river diverters on the Thomson and Macalister Rivers and Rainbow Creek. (MCCC) or be a customer or nominated representative with a groundwater or surface water licence (SGRF). A customer is defined as being involved in the ordering, accepting and/or using of water from the Macalister Irrigation District delivery system, or receiving an account from SRW for water delivered in the relevant Irrigation District.

Members of the Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum (SGRF) are limited to SRW Take and Use Licence holders.

Membership is for a term of between two and four years and members may be appointed for a further term of up to four years, with appointments of half of the members ceasing every two years. If a member ceases to be a customer within their term, they are allowed to see out the term of appointment at the discretion of the committee Chair and management representatives.

SRW attendance at committee meetings will consist of the Managing Director, the relevant operations manager, and the General Manager Service Delivery. A standing invitation for customer committee meetings is open to all board members. The board may, from time to time, meet committees as a whole to gauge first-hand views of matters considered by the committee.

Members of each committee represent the wider customer base and are expected to provide their advice and feedback in the interests of all customers.

Macalister Customer Consultative Committee (MCCC)

The MCCC consists of up to 12 members. The committee helps to shape and improve SRW’s Eastern Irrigation Business, providing input into system and service improvements. Among other things, the MCCC members provide a customer’s perspective on business issues and help shape positive external stakeholder views on the Macalister Irrigation Area.

Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum (SGRF)

The SGRF consists of up to 14 members.

The work of the SGRF and the Groundwater and Rivers team involves a strong relationship with the Minister for Water and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA). Ministerial Guidelines or Directions are issued from time to time, guiding judgements that relate to SRW’s licensing functions. These guidelines and policies, such as formal Sustainable Water Strategies, are developed by DEECA.

SRW provides the opportunity for SGRF members to provide advice and feedback on policy developments through interaction with senior SRW and DEECA staff. SGRF members may seek to advocate a position during the policy development phase; however, once a policy is finalised SRW, as a delegate of the Minister, must adhere to lawful directions and formally endorsed policy.

Committee appointment procedure

Appointments to SRW's customer consultative committees are made commencing on 1 July and concluding on 30 June.

- Every two years a report will be submitted to the board advising on impending vacancies and a plan for filling the vacancies.
- Vacancies are then be advertised.
- An assessment of applications will take place and interviews will be held, if required.
- A report will be submitted to the board, seeking endorsement of the appointments.

A panel consisting of the committee chair, a customer committee member, the SRW Managing Director and relevant SRW manager will review the applications. If the committee chair is an applicant, another member nominated by the committee will assess the applications.

The panel assesses each applicant in terms of the key selection criteria, the diversity statement, and eligibility criteria. Applicants may be interviewed at the panel's discretion.

The committee chairs and deputy chairs are appointed by the committee each year on or after 1 August.

Casual appointments may occur outside of the normal membership timeframes mentioned above. This could be due to the resignation or removal or a member, or because a specific expertise is required on a short-term basis. Management may appoint a new casual member until the next round of formal recruiting occurs, on the basis that the appointment will expire when the next formal recruitment process commences.

For casual appointments, management will consult the relevant committee chair before making an appointment and the board must be notified at the next board meeting following the appointment.

Recruitment

For proper engagement with customers, SRW must engage broadly and be mindful of diversity. When making appointments to a committee, SRW's objective is to form committees whose members reflect diversity in their:

- gender
- age
- industry experience, interest and demographic
- crop type or industry
- production system
- scale of operation
- land tenure
- balance of skills, knowledge or community involvement,
- geographic location, and
- networks.

Applicants must be able to dissect issues and make informed decisions on future directions and expectations, as well as being lateral thinkers who are able to bring new ideas. Applicants should have strong networks among customers and stakeholders and have a good understanding of environmental, social, and economic issues facing the business associated with the committee.

Induction

SRW will provide each person appointed to membership of a committee with the following:

- The Customer Consultative Committee Handbook
- A copy of the Department of Treasury and Finance's Appointment guidelines detailing the relevant sessional fees
- The most recent SRW Annual Report
- The current Corporate Plan and Price Submission
- VPS Code of Conduct
- Any additional documents that may be required.

Conduct

SRW expects committee members to be respectful and inclusive at all times. The views and opinions of each individual will be equally and fairly considered by all parties.

The committees are guided by behaviours identified in the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees. It is expected that all committee members undertake to demonstrate these behaviours in all interactions with each other, SRW staff, and other parties who may attend or support meetings, with a specific focus on:

- responsiveness – frank, impartial and timely,
- integrity – honest, open, and transparent,
- impartiality – providing advice on merit without bias or self-interest,
- accountability – working on clear objectives in a transparent manner, and
- respect – treating one another fairly and objectively ensuring freedom from discrimination, harassment, and bullying.

SRW reserves the right to review membership should the behaviours demonstrated by an individual directly contravene the expectations above.

Expectations

The members will commit to:

- undertaking preparatory work prior to meetings, including reading documentation
- attending scheduled meetings and contributing to discussions in a constructive and inclusive manner
- providing necessary data or information in a timely manner
- providing timely and constructive feedback, and
- notifying the relevant operations manager and/ or the committee secretary as soon as practical if any matter arises which may impact their ability to participate on a committee.

The members should expect:

- consistent communication with SRW,
- a forward plan of meetings to be scheduled annually prior to the beginning of the year in question,
- documentation relevant to meetings to be circulated in advance to ensure adequate preparatory time, and
- that reasonable time will be given to provide feedback.

Confidentiality

In general, members are encouraged to discuss the broad issues and ideas raised within their sphere of influence. However, members shall not improperly use information to gain advantage for themselves or someone else, or to cause detriment to outcomes.

SRW will make available information that is relevant to assist in the committee's work, other than information which might infringe on privacy.

SRW acknowledge that there may be times where sensitive matters are discussed and confidentiality will be required. In this case, members will be directly informed that the materials presented, or matters discussed, are to be treated as confidential.

Committee members are required to provide SRW with personal information to allow effective communication and appropriate remuneration of sitting fees. Members' names, contact details and photos may be used by SRW in relevant publications, such as, but not limited to, newsletters and SRW's website.

SRW will, from time to time, conduct briefings for customer consultative committees which may necessitate the provision of confidential information.

Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest exists whether it is:

- Real – it currently exists,
- Potential – it may arise, given the circumstances, or
- Perceived – members of the public could reasonably form the view that a conflict exists or could arise.

It is not a conflict of interest for a committee member to receive a service from SRW in common with other customers of SRW, provided that the committee member does not stand to gain an advantage that would not be readily available to a non-committee member.

All matters that raise or appear to raise a conflict of interest should be disclosed to the committee chairperson immediately and recorded in the minutes. This record must include the nature of any private interest and the subsequent actions taken by the member and committee.

Where a conflict of interest is identified, the relevant committee member will:

- leave the room at the start of the relevant agenda item and not return until the start of the next agenda item,
- not discuss the matter at all with any other committee member (either within the meeting or elsewhere), and
- not participate in any committee decision on the matter.

Removal from the Committee

A member or members of a committee may be suspended or dismissed by the by SRW if SRW has determined:

- that the member/s have breached the Code of Conduct,
- that the member/s no longer meet the eligibility criteria for membership of the committee,

- that the member/s by their conduct have become disruptive or uncooperative, or are unable to work within the strict requirements of or the general spirit and intention of the Code of Conduct, and/or,
- that the conduct of an individual has brought, or is likely if continued to bring, to either or both the committee or SRW into disrepute.
- or committee member/s suspension or dismissal is proposed, the following steps will be taken:

  Where SRW proposes that a member or members of a committee are to be suspended or dismissed a panel, comprising of the Managing Director, the operations manager and the chairperson or deputy chairperson of the customer consultative committee will, within 21 days of receiving written representations, assess the case and advise of the outcome to the member/s concerned. The panel's decision will be final.

A committee may be suspended or terminated by SRW if SRW has determined:

- that a committee by its conduct has become disruptive or dysfunctional and unable to work within the strict requirements of or the general spirit and intention of the Code of Conduct,
- that the conduct of the committee has brought, or is likely if continued to bring, either or both of the committee or SRW into disrepute, and/or,
- that the intended work of the committee is completed.

Where SRW proposes that a committee be abolished the following steps will be taken:

- The members of the committee will be formally advised of the situation by SRW.
- The members of the committee will have the opportunity to show cause as to why the members should not be removed from the committee and to present a case to SRW within 21 days of receiving SRW's formal advice.

Remuneration

Payment of sitting fees and travel expenses are made as per the Department of Treasury and Finance's *Appointment and Recruitment Guidelines*. The payments are made:

- from attendance records, as noted in regular meeting minutes,
- in accordance with regulations set by the Victorian Government from time to time,
- as determined from time to time by the Minister,
- for regular meetings of the committees and special meetings requested by SRW,
- within the scale as set out in the *Appointment and Recruitment Guidelines*.

SRW customer consultative committees will be remunerated in line with Schedule C: Group C organisations - Advisory Committees, Registration board and Management boards of small organisations : C3 of the Victorian Government's Appointment and Remuneration Guidelines

Advisory committees required to consider issues/matters that are local or affect confined areas including local land and water advisory committees.

Most meetings are expected to fall into the half-day category, unless significantly in excess of four hours.

Should the committee chairperson be unavailable for a meeting, the acting committee chairperson is to receive remuneration at the rate outlined in the *Appointment and Recruitment Guidelines*.

The guidelines can be viewed here: https://bit.ly/3QbG3DH

Reimbursement for expenses

As per the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) guidelines, committee members are eligible to be reimbursed for reasonable out-of-pocket expenses such as travelling, meals and other incidental expenses associated with attending meetings, overnight absence from home, or absence from the normal work location in the course of field duties, in line with DEECA and SRW policies. All expenses should comply with the SRW travel, accommodation, and meals guidelines – any amounts above these will be at the committee member's expense.

Travel reimbursement is provided at the Australian Tax Office (ATO) rate for travel between the place where you are required for committee attendance and your residence or usual place of work (whichever is relevant on the day of travel), exceeding 15 kilometres one way.

You can view the rates here: https://bit.ly/3cvpTXN

All expense claims must be made on the claim form, accompanied by a tax invoice providing sufficient information to validate the claim, and lodged with the committee secretary within 28 days of the expense being incurred.

The committee secretary must verify the expenses and confirm they were incurred during the committee's work.

SRW provides for the day-to-day operations of customer consultative committees including sitting fees, room hire, catering and the like.

Committee Relationships

The committee chairperson is the principal spokesperson for the committee. It is the chairperson's responsibility to speak, write or represent the committee where required.

Customer committee members should encourage customers to take up any suggestions, queries, complaints, grievances or compliments about SRW with the relevant operations manager. If this raises a wider question of business practice or policy, the member is encouraged to raise the matter with the customer consultative committee for consideration.

Customer complaints

Committees are not a customer complaints service or customer liaison service. Any complaints should be forwarded to SRW without delay. Committee members will not advocate for complainants.

Meetings

Attendees must confirm attendance by responding to the calendar invitation or other method at least two weeks before a meeting.

If there is less than 40% attendance at a scheduled meeting, then SRW reserve the right to reschedule the meeting to a more suitable time.

SRW's customer consultative committees are not required to cast votes or make decisions, but to provide clarity and observations in order to assist SRW with their recommendations to the board.

Regular meetings

The committee will meet with SRW at least four times per year and meetings will be held in person or via video conference (Microsoft Teams). The location and time of the committee meetings is a decision for SRW upon the advice of members.

Additional meetings will be scheduled as required and agreed by the Managing Director, the operations manager the committee chairperson. Information forums with individual committees will be convened upon request and with approval of the Managing Director.

Agendas

The agenda for committee meetings will be aligned to the annual workplan and be set by the operations manager and the committee secretary and provided along with relevant information papers five (5) business days prior to scheduled regular meetings.

Committee members must raise a matter for inclusion in the agenda with the committee chairperson or committee secretary before the agenda is set for the meeting.

The annual workplan will be circulated for discussion with the committee at the last meeting of each calendar year.

Out of session or additional business

Business which can't be conducted during a scheduled meeting may be done by circulating papers digitally to all members. The agreement will be recorded in the minutes of the next meeting.

Additional meetings, i.e. workshops or consultation sessions, will be scheduled by agreement of the committee chairperson and SRW and will be paid in line with the DTF guidelines.

General business

Committee members can raise matters not on the meeting agenda and are encouraged to raise these items with SRW prior to the meeting, for inclusion in the agenda where appropriate.

Additional items can be added to the agenda for discussion only:

- at the commencement of the meeting (before any matters of business have been dealt with),
- with unanimous agreement by all at the meeting.

If there is a question that is unlikely to be of general interest it is preferable to explore this with the committee secretary outside of the meeting.

If questions are raised, management may elect to provide a response at the next meeting, or to circulate it in due course after having made appropriate investigation and enquiry.

Minutes of meetings

Draft minutes of meetings are circulated after each meeting and must be treated as confidential by members until they are confirmed.

Confirmed minutes are added to SRW's website and will be publicly available for a rolling 12-month period. Copies of the minutes are also available upon request to SRW.

Administrative duties

The committee secretary will be the formal link between the committee and SRW Management.

The committee secretary will provide administrative support for all regular meetings.

Customer Consultative Committee Handbook Review

The Customer Consultative Committee Handbook will be reviewed by SRW Senior Management at least every 4 years and is approved by the Managing Director. Customer Consultative Committee Members will be reissued with a copy of the handbook after each review and asked to complete the declaration after each review.

Version #	Implemented By	Revision Date	Approved By	Approval Date	Reason
8.0	Simon Wilkinson – General Manager Service Delivery	November 2023	Cameron FitzGerald - Managing Director	8 December 2023	Review to align handbook to SRW Customer Engagement approach and corporate style

Customer consultative committee member declaration

I have read and understood the Southern Rural Water Customer Consultative Committee Handbook and agree to comply with the conditions as described.

NAME ____

SIGNED ____

DATE ________/_________/________

COMMITTEE ____

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MACALISTER CUSTOMER CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE – MCCC – ROLLING WORK PLAN

	Requirement	2025				2026				Notes
		FEB	MAY	AUG	NOV	FEB	MAY	AUG	NOV	
Principal and Business Matters	Communications report	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Board update	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Water Supply East Update	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Brief paragraph to update to committee on current projects and issues
	End of season wrap-up			✓				✓		
Policy and Strategic Direction	Committee appointments			✓				✓		Yearly. (Chair and Deputy Chair vote)
	Environmental Water Management Flows				✓				✓	WGCMA
	Climate Outlook and Drought Response Update			✓				✓		
	Corporate Plan				✓				✓	For noting. Full plan provided as discretionary reading
	Price Submission – PS28 (1hr at each meeting)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	✓		✓	February – Issues and expectations May – Solutions and services October - Pricing
Project updates (DEECA and SRW)	HARC MID Operational Model Review	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Update or discussion at each meeting ongoing (archived action item #35442)
Meeting Admin and Other Items	Meeting evaluation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Important issues from other customer committees	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	As required
	Matters referred to the committee by the board/board committee	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	As required
	Committee Workplan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

BRIEFING PAPER (For information only)

Macalister Irrigation Drainage Draft Decision Making Framework

Author: Will Headlam - Environmental Officer, Environment and Climate Adaptation Team

Responsible executive: Penny Winbanks - Acting General Manager Strategy, People & Culture

Date: May 2026

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1. Purpose

This briefing paper describes the current status of salinity management in the Macalister Irrigation District (MID) and explains why decisions are required about the pump's future

2. Background

Salinity risk across the MID is driven by a combination of different factors including rainfall, soils, topography and groundwater conditions. Some parts of the district are historically saline, particularly around the shores of Lake Wellington (see Attachment 1).

Rainfall remains the primary driver of salinity risk. Wet years, like the three La Nina years from 2020-23, increase water tables and salinity risk, while dry years reduce risk.

Southern Rural Water (SRW) collaborates on salinity management with stakeholders including the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Adaptation (DEECA), Agriculture Victoria (Ag Vic) and the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA) informed by the latter's Lake Wellington Land and Water Management Plan (LWLWMP). The LWLWMP specifically addresses risk from irrigation-induced salinity and shallow water tables. Salinity management requires multiple planning tools, with the Lake Wellington Land and Water Management Plan (WGCMA) remaining central

Salinity is managed in a variety of ways. SRW's MID modernisation program has replaced 80 km of 100-year-old channels with underground pipes and automation. This has lowered regional water tables through reduced leakage, while enhanced system automation has improved irrigation practices by landholders which has reduced waterlogging and minimises salt mobilisation. The WGCMA and Ag Vic work with farmers to implement best practice on farm to improve water use efficiency, particularly through the Sustainable Irrigation Program (SIP).

3. Current public salinity pump network

SRW maintains and operates 19 public groundwater salinity pumps in or near the MID. Six pumps are currently operating, with up to three more potentially operable with maintenance (see Attachment 2). Pumps are between 20 and 60 years old and have reached or are nearing the end of their useful life.

Operation and maintenance are funded through the salinity mitigation charge paid by all regulated customers in the MID.

The funding provided by the salinity mitigation charge does not make provision for significant pump refurbishment or replacements, meaning that the existing funding model is not sufficient to sustain all pumps indefinitely.

Salinity risk varies across the district and benefits from pumping are not evenly shared.

Each existing salinity pump must therefore be assessed on its own merits and, depending on these merits and their associated funding requirements, the pricing model may need to be re-set.

4. Draft Groundwater Salinity Pumps Decision-Making Framework

The West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA) in partnership with SRW have developed a decision-making framework to guide discussions between agencies and irrigators to inform how we approach managing the salinity pumps now and into the future. As each pump is unique in its current operational capability and capacity, decisions are required to consider which pumps should continue to be operated, which pumps should be decommissioned, and which pumps could be transferred to private ownership. The decisions about individual pumps need to be bespoke and fit-for-purpose and in consultation with affected landowners.

To consider how each individual pump will be managed, the following draft decision criteria are proposed:

- Some public salinity pumps will continue to be required to protect irrigated land at medium to high salinity risk.
- Areas with existing pumps and a history of salinity impacts could be considered for continued protection
- Where groundwater quality is suitable (less than 3,500 EC), transfer of pumps to private ownership could be considered
- Future costs should be shared between irrigators, SRW, and government where a public benefit exists. No new publicly funded salinity pumps are proposed.

As SRW own the groundwater salinity pumps, we will lead and apply the Decision-Making Framework to each groundwater pumps.

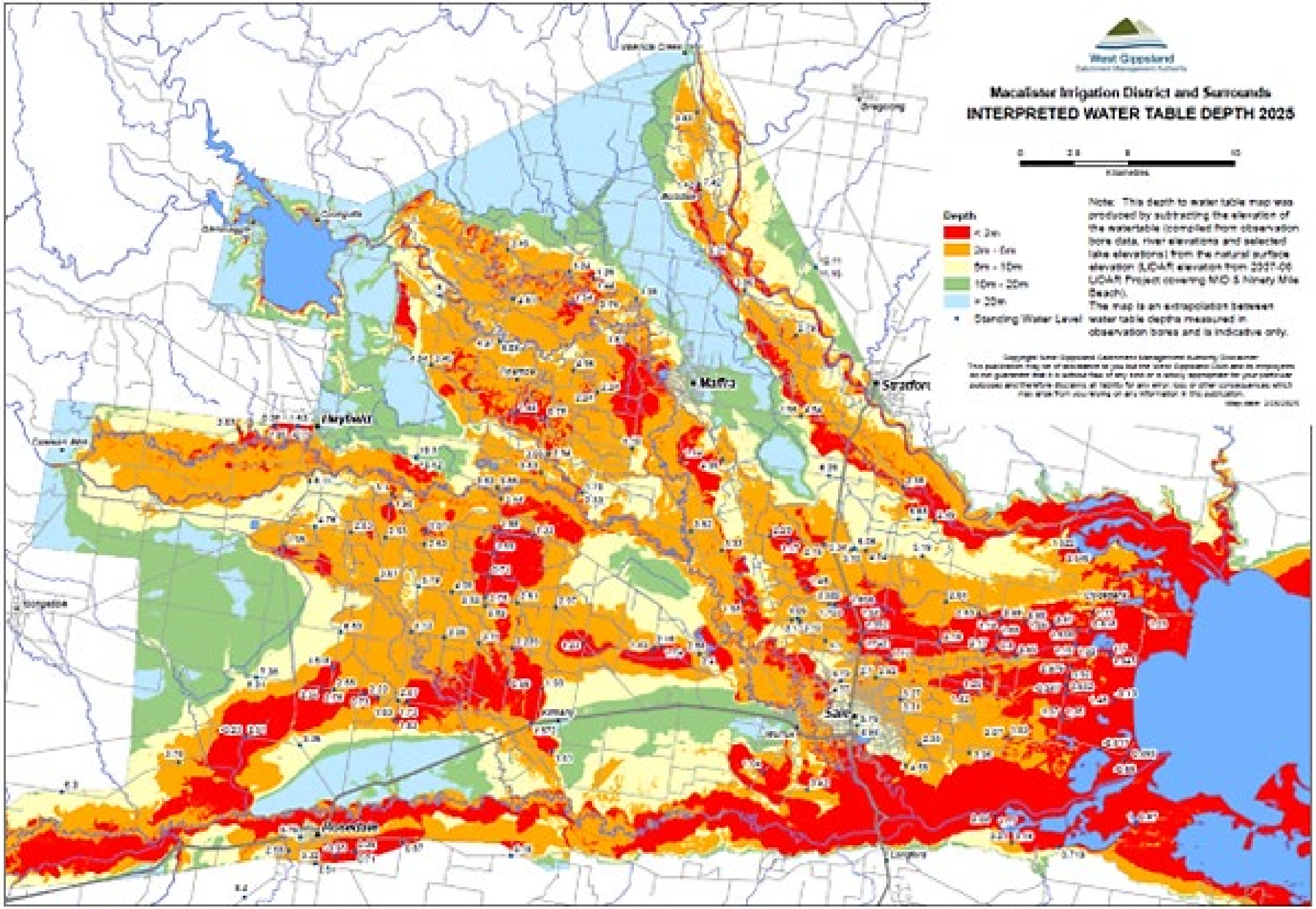
5. Consultation and next steps

SRW will work with WGCMA to refine the draft framework with the aim to begin implementing the framework next financial year. SRW will continue to lead and be accountable for decisions regarding public salinity pumps.

Any potential changes identified for individual salinity pumps will be discussed early and directly with affected customers. Consultation with customers on future needs, cost sharing, and expectations will occur through Price Submission processes and/or Macalister Fresh consultations.

SRW will continue to consult with the Macalister Customer Consultative Committee on the future of salinity pumps.

Attachment 1: Water tables and salinity risk



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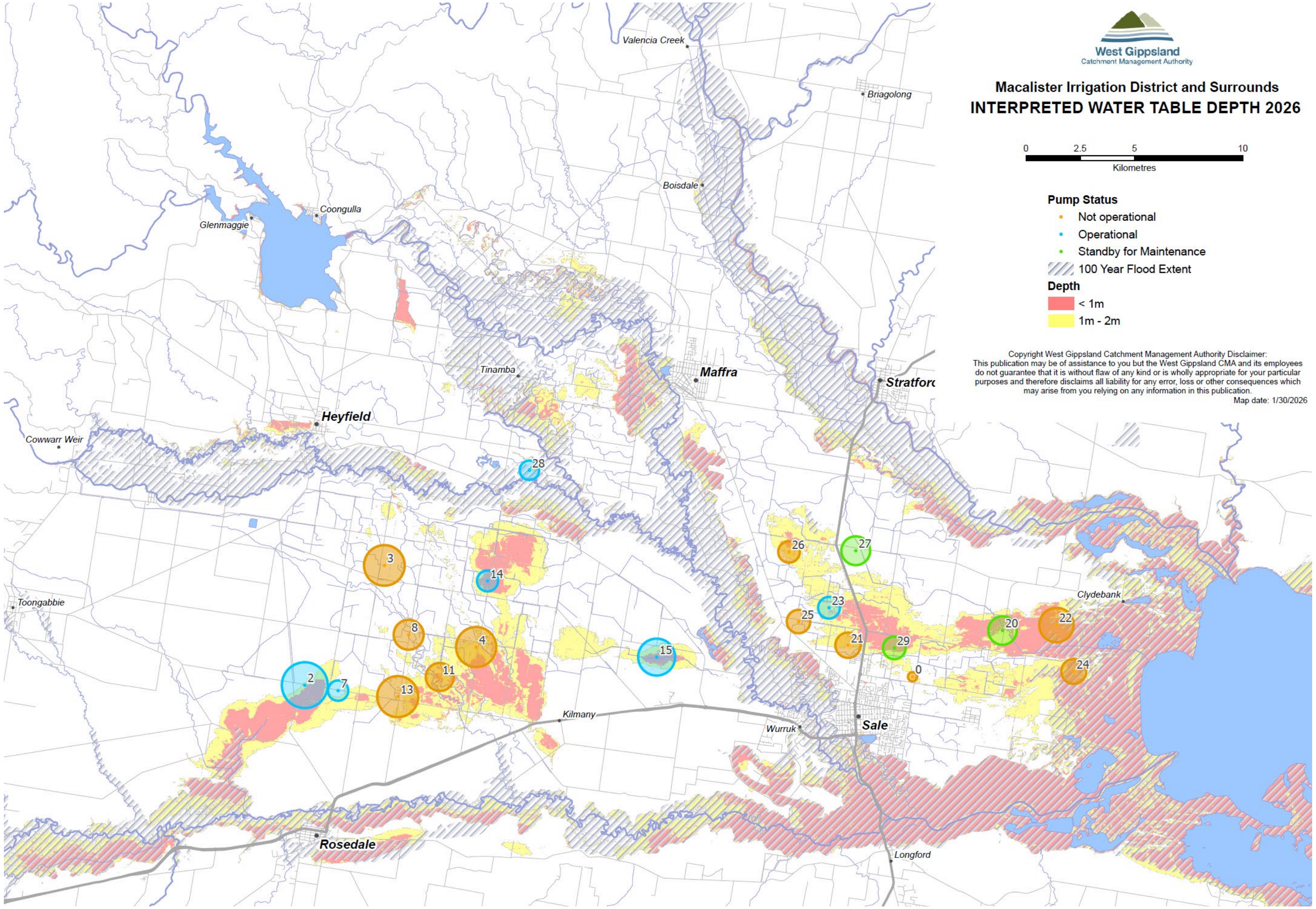
Attachment 2: SRW's Salinity Pumps



Blue *– operating* ***Green*** *– likely to be operating soon* ***Orange*** *– not operational*