

Macalister Customer Consultative Committee

Minutes of Meeting 208

Date	Time	Location
26 August 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 Mark Coleman	Committee Member
Mr James Clyne	Committee Member
Mr Brad White	Committee Member

In Attendance

Mr Cameron FitzGerald	Managing Director, SRW
Mr Simon Wilkinson	General Manager Service Delivery, SRW
Mr Matt Cook	Manger Strategic Projects and Service Optimisation
Renee Wicks	Manager Water Supply East, SRW
Ms Hayley Taylor	Executive Assistant, SRW (minutes)

Guests

Matt Weatherall	Program Lead MID
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Apologies

Mr Warrick Purdon	Committee Member
Mr Bernard Coleman	Committee Member
Mr Tim Missen	Committee Member

Guests

Mr Thomas Dwyer	Committee Member
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1. Acknowledgement of County

The Deputy Chair acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the land on which the meeting was held.

2. Welcome and Apologies

Mr Benn Thexton, MCCC Chair advised that Mr Chris Van Den Dikkenberg, Deputy Chair would chair the meeting.

The Deputy Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and noted the apologies.

Renee Wicks, SRW's new Manager Water Supply East was introduced to the committee and Renee provided an overview of her experience. It was **requested** that Renee's contacted details are circulated with the draft minutes.

Action	Action Officer	Due Date
Circulate Renee Wicks' contacted details with the draft minutes.	H. TAYLOR	05/09/2025

3. Declaration of conflicts of interest

The Deputy 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 207

The minutes of meeting 207 were **approved**.

Moved: Kate Lamb **Second:** James Clyne

5. Business Arising

The report was taken as read and status comments noted.

Members advised the process in regard to groundwater transfers is unclear, including responsibilities and in their experience, takes significantly more time than the 12 weeks indicated by SRW. It was highlighted by a member a drainage plan was not received by SRW but there was no follow-up when the information was not provided as expected and customers do not have an awareness of at what stage of the process their application is at. The committee discussed whether there is or could be a different process for temporary and permanent transfers. Management discussed their requirements to assess for potential impacts to other users and the environment when transferring groundwater, but acknowledge the processes for groundwater transfers could be improved.

Management **agreed** to:

- review processes and information available to customers to understand criteria for different groundwater amounts being transferred.
- Invite Penny Winbanks, Manager Statutory Functions to attend the next meeting to discuss the groundwater transfer process and understand area's where communication can be improved.

Action	Action Officer	Due Date
Review processes and information available to customers to understand criteria for different groundwater amounts being transferred.	P. WINBANKS	7/11/2025
Invite Penny Winbanks, Manager Statutory Functions to attend the next meeting to discuss the groundwater transfer process and understand area's where communication can be improved.	P. WINBANKS	7/11/2025

6. Committee appointments

Management left the room while the committee undertook a vote.

Upon SRW's return the committee **confirmed**

- Mr Benn Thexton was re-appointed as Chair; and
- Mr Chris Van Den Dikkenberg was re-appointed as Deputy Chair for the next 12 months.

7. Guest Speaker

7.1 Winter Capital Works Program

Mr Matt Weatherall Program Lead MID, provided the committee with an overview of SRW's Winter Capital Works Program highlighting:

- Tunnel 5 replacement works commenced on the downstream section to replace 100 year old structure with reinforced concrete pipes. Works will be completed over two years due to environmental considerations.
- Lake Glenmaggie Gate Painting – repainting of the gates required every 15-20 years to prolong the life of the gates with one gate painted during 2025 winter period. Two gates are scheduled for repainting in 2026 with the timing of gate painting dependant on the water level in Glenmaggie Weir.
- Customer outlet replacement (MID2030 Phase 2 – C6 project) – older customer outlets are being replaced with modern slip meters. Sites are prioritised based on usage with approx. 140 customer outlets replaced over the last 3 years of this project.
- Regulator Replacement Program – 4 sites upgraded in 2025 with priority given to sites based on criticality. Works will continue in 2026.
- Lake Glenmaggie Needle Valve refurbishment – these valves control flow into the Main Southern Channel and require refurbishment over time. A bulkhead

has been constructed so the valves can be accessed during supply periods and design work is being undertaken to understand how the valves will be refurbished.

- Electrical upgrades undertaken at Blue Rock and Cowwarr to update aging infrastructure.

A member inquired as to whether any people on the Newry pipeline had not completed their co-contribution works. Management advised that all works have been undertaken as discussed with landholders and there are a few payments yet to be made. 24 month defect inspections will be completed in the near future and SRW will be in contact with customers to organise the inspections. One issue of subsidence on a property was fixed quickly by Jaydo.

The committee discussed how much Newry has changed since the pipeline was installed commenting that it is great to see what the customers are doing with their properties. The Managing Director reflected on the modernisation projects over the past 6 years, as well as the delivery of projects that address other critical assets such as tunnel 5 and regulators and the importance of having a comprehensive program in place to be able to deliver these projects to ensure reliable service to customers.

8. TRAINING

8.1 Governance Training – Customer Consultative Committee recruitment process

Ms Hayley Taylor, Executive Assistant provided the committee with training on SRW's Customer Consultative Committee recruitment process. The training covered:

- Eligibility for membership
- Appointment terms
- Recruitment process and advertising avenues
- Key Selection Criteria

9. PRINCIPLE MATTERS – FOR DISCUSSION

9.1 Water Supply East Update

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

- Delivery for the 2024-25 season was higher than the 5 year average, with an efficiency of 86%. The target for the 2024-25 season was 85% and will increase to 90% for the 2026-27 season. The target before modernisation was 70%.
- Approx. 75% of high reliability water was utilised over the 2024-25 season. The committee discussed customer feedback on the allocation of low reliability water and the impact of customers not trading available high reliability water during the season. The committee acknowledged trading was not a common practice in the Macalister Irrigation District and SRW has

undertaken work over the last few years to promote trading. The committee discussed whether fees are charged for sleeper licences and the demographic of customers who are not using or trading water

Management advised customers who have a sleeper-licence are not charged a fee, this change would be a policy matter and there is no appetite for this kind of fee structure.

- Over the winter maintenance period SRW completed the third year of the PayLoad application trial. This will now be included as an ongoing activity over the winter maintenance period, but will not replace the Magnacide H program. A review of data will determine whether the withhold period can be reduced further and this will determine whether or not the chemical can be used during the irrigation season
- Macalister Fresh Project – next steps for the project will be to consult with customers and the community. The committee discussed whether the project will consider how to make sleeper licence water available especially the high reliability water.
- Stop Water letters will be sent to customers that have not paid their bills. The committee discussed the engagement process with customers who might forget a payment, whether reminder notices are sent to customers and whether and SMS or other reminder could be sent. Management advised reminder notices are not sent to customers and if a customer forgets a payment, they are notified there is an overdue amount for the reminder of the bill. Management **agreed** to provide the committee with further information on the payment plan and reminder process.

A member inquired whether there is there a calibration process for modernised outlets. Management advised meters are calibrated on installation, and Rubicon advice is that they do not require recalibration due to the type of meters. SRW is investigating testing requirements in line with the DEECA Metering Policy.

A committee member advised Agriculture Victoria are undertaking a project in the Thorpdale area to understand whether SRW meter flowrate data can be used by customers in their operations. Management confirmed SRW is aware of the project and is working with the project team to provide insights and information.

Action	Action Officer	Due Date
Provide the MCCC with further information on the payment plan and reminder process.	R. WICKS	7/11/2025

10. PRINCIPAL MATTERS – FOR NOTING

10.1 Communication Report

The report was taken as read. The committee advised the report is beneficial and highlighted the importance of having information available when customers need or want it.

10.2 Corporate Plan

The committee was advised SRW's 2025-26 Corporate Plan is now available for viewing on SRW's website. The Managing Director highlighted the plan provides information and assurance to government on SRW's borrowings to fund future work.

11. COMMITTEE MATTERS

11.1 Roundtable discussion

The committee members discussed current conditions and what they are expecting for the season ahead highlighting:

- some silage is already being harvested and growth rates seem to be quite good for this time of year.
- the price of fodder is currently around \$550/tonne and it will be interesting to see whether customers will grow their own this year.
- there could be an opportunity for MID customers to grow fodder this year and whether that will encourage more people to temporarily trade water.

11.2 Important issues from other customer committees

Mr Simon Wilkinson, General Manager Service Delivery provided an update which included discussion on the Rosters and Restrictions process, communication to customers, compliance and enforcement approach, SW -drought conditions, farmer helping farmer initiative and drought support packages. The SGRF will also be undergoing member recruitment at the same time as the MCCC

The committee discussed impact of drought to Werribee customers with Management advising that Werribee has not experienced drought conditions like to South-west, but customers were impacted by recycled water outage.

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

Mr Cameron FitzGerald, Managing Director advised the Board had recently discussed the Macalister Fresh work reiterating the existing footprint of the district must be maximised before expansion is considered. Board feedback on the project is being considered and additional information will be provided back to the board before consultation begins. The feedback from the committee at the May 2025 MCCC meeting was considered by the project team and the project will communicate short, medium and long term objectives.

11.4 2025 meeting schedule

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

12. GENERAL BUSINESS

The following items were raised by members:

James Clyne – Water Auction

Feedback from customers has been that the shelf price of water is higher than people seeking larger volumes of water are willing to pay. The Managing Director discussed SRW's policy regarding the price of water "on the shelf" noting that the highest auction price is allocated to shelf water. An auction of 1000ML will occur next year and will reset the shelf price. Unsold water is also available for temporary trade for a short amount of time. Feedback from committee is that all the water did not sell due to cash flow.

Chris Van Den Dikkenberg – member interaction with customers

Mr Van Den Dikkenberg discussed customers raising issues with MCCC members and providing information back to members to ensure that they can adequately address any concerns raised. Individuals may not feel they are getting their issues resolved, or the issue is not being escalated internally. They then feel that the matter would best be resolved if it is brought to the committee.

Management advised issues should be raised with SRW without delay, and acknowledged committee members may not be advised of the action being undertaken. The attendees discussed being able to check-in in at the end of a meeting to ensure members are equipped with any information that they need to speak to customers.

Flood Warden system

The Manager Emergency Planning and Risk is working with flood wardens and have organised text messages to go out to customers. Other stakeholders that have requested notifications will also be added to communications lists.

13. Meeting evaluation

The Chair invited members to ask any further questions to ensure they were equipped to discuss matters with customers. No clarifications were required.

14. Next meeting

The next meeting of the Macalister Customer Consultative Committee is scheduled for Tuesday 25 November 2025 at SRW's Maffra Office.

15. Close

With no further business the meeting was declared closed at 12:09pm.