

Macalister Customer Consultative Committee

Minutes of Meeting 200

Date	Time	Location
29 August 2023	10:00am	SRW Maffra Office

Present

Mr Benn Thexton	Committee Chair
Mr Alan Clyne	Committee Member
Mr Brad White	Committee Member
Mr Graeme Anderson	Committee Member
Mr Kate Lamb	Committee Member
Mr Norm Drew	Committee Member
Mr Stephen Dwyer	Committee Member

In Attendance

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

Apologies

Mr Simon Wilkinson	General Manager Service Delivery, SRW
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Absent

Ms Jeannette Howie	Committee Member
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Guests

Penny Clark	Senior Manager Water Reform Legislation Oversight, Water and Catchments, DEECA
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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.

4. Confirmation of minutes – Meeting 199

The minutes of meeting 199 were approved.

Moved: Graeme Anderson

Second: Alan Clyne

5. Business Arising

The report was taken as read.

6. COMMITTEE MATTERS – For discussion

6.1 Customer Engagement Review

The committee chair noted the email that had been sent to SRW management in relation to changes proposed to the committee as part of the Customer Engagement Review.

The committee discussed the points raised in the email with the main issue raised by the members being the independent chairing of the committee, which they felt would reduce their influence on the SRW board and management. They stated that having an independent chair would dilute customers voices and the chair should be an irrigator who is prepared to drive the requirements of the irrigation area for all water users.

The members also expressed their desire to have an irrigator on the board. The committee highlighted the importance of understanding what matters to customers and that this is difficult without current irrigator being on the board. Understanding the unique nature of the Macalister Irrigation Area was also highlighted as an important matter in the appointment of board positions.

The Chair indicated that there is an opportunity for SRW to work with customers and understand the aspirations of the committee who seek maximum ability to influence what happens to water in the district as it is critical to customers livelihood.

The committee referred to the possibility of a media response if it is perceived that SRW is not listening to customers.

The committee suggested that any appointments to the committee are made by the Chair, one other MCCC member and a member of the board.

The Managing Director thanked the committee for their feedback and stated that he takes all comments seriously. He explained the rationale for proposing an independent chair who can speak for all customers and be impartial, particularly in light of the circumstances of the departure of the most recent Chair.

Having considered committee feedback, the Managing Director accepted that his explanation of the value of an independent Chair did not adequately address the importance in the committee's mind that there should be a strong link between those who *own the water* and the board.

The Managing Director also addressed the committee comments regarding the board appointment process and referred to correspondence from the Minister for Water to the MCCC in 2022, who welcomed applications from the members through the official government appointment process which occurs every two years.

In regard to board attendance at MCCC meetings, the Managing Director advised that in his capacity as a member of the SRW board, he ensures that he is available to attend every meeting.

The Managing Director proposed that the current model of a chair that is elected by the committee could be considered for adoption. He then opened a discussion on what improvements might be made to the current model if an independent chair approach did not proceed.

The Committee indicated that the members will need to support the chair, and recommended that they spend time as a member of the committee before being elected as Chair. They suggested that new members need to work as a team and be accountable as a team.

At the conclusion of the discussions, it was **agreed** that the following recommendations for appointing an MCCC Chair and recruiting members to the committee would be taken to the September Board meeting for approval:

- *The Committee **agreed** that the Chair of the MCCC should be someone that owns water shares and is an irrigator in the area, and this person would be appointed by the Committee.*

Moved: Graeme Anderson

Seconded: Stephen Dwyer

NB: Mr Drew abstained from voting.

- *The Committee **agreed** that recommendation for appointments should be made by the Chair, another MCCC representative, a board member, being the Managing Director and the Manager Water Supply East.*

Moved: Stephen Dwyer

Seconded: Brad White

NB: Mr Drew abstained from voting.

Action	Action Officer	Due Date
<p>Present the following recommendations to the board at the September 2023 meeting for approval:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Chair of the MCCC should be someone that owns water shares and is an irrigator in the area, and this person would be appointed by the Committee.</i> <i>Appointments should be made by the Chair, another MCCC representative, a board member, being the Managing Director and the Manager Water Supply East.</i> 	C FITZGERALD	05/09/2023

7. GUEST SPEAKERS

7.1 Place of Take

Ms Penny Clark, Senior Manager Water Reform Legislation Oversight, Water and Catchments, DEECA joined the meeting at 11:19am and provided an update on the Place of Take approval framework highlighting,

- Place of Take is a new approach to water delivery rights in Victorias declared systems and that this framework does not affect water shares.
- Issues affecting irrigators on the lower part of the Murray system where there is risk that they are unable to supply water to irrigators at the volume and time they want it.
- Changes from this project will mean that water users across the state will have a Place of Take approval recorded in the Water Register.
- Delivery Share will remain and means that the irrigator has the right to a share of available water in a shortfall.
- For River Diverters, the extraction share will be moved from the works licence to Place of Take approvals, with the extraction share remaining the right to a share of available water.
- Commencement of the approach has been delayed due to impact of flooding to irrigation that are affected by these changes. The new commencement date is expected to by 20 November 2023.
- Changes have been made to the water register, ready for implementation.
- New ministerial rules are being developed to set out how extraction share is converted for complex scenarios.
- Extraction share rules, where needed, sets limits and rules for trade of extraction share.

- DEECA is consulting with irrigators via consultative committee, irrigator groups and solicitor and broker forums.
- Links to further information will be distributed to the group after the meeting.

The committee thanked Ms Clark for the presentation.

Ms Clark left the meeting at 11:33am.

8. PRINCIPLE MATTERS – FOR NOTING

8.1 Manager Water Supply East Update

The report was taken as read. Mr Cook highlighted that all water being released from Glenmaggie is for orders from irrigators or the environment.

The committee **requested** that allocation rules are added to the weekly update and website and a text with a link to the information is sent to customers so the committee can refer customers to these information sources if they are asked whether Glenmaggie is spilling.

Action	Action Officer	Due Date
Update MID Weekly Update and website with a link to allocation rules.	M. COOK	29/09/2023
Once the allocation rules have been added to the website, send the link via text to MID customers.	M. COOK	29/09/2023

8.2 Communications Report

The report was taken as read.

A member inquired where the information regarding the centenary of Glenmaggie Weir is located on SRW's website. Management **agreed** to confirm with the Communications team that the information could be found on the SRW website and relay this information back to Mr Drew.

Action	Action Officer	Due Date
Confirm where the information regarding the centenary of Glenmaggie Weir is located on the SRW website and relay this information back to Mr Drew.	M. COOK	29/09/2023

9. PRINCIPLE MATTERS – FOR DISCUSSION

9.1 Board Update

Mr Cameron FitzGerald, Managing Director advised the board had recently discussed:

- Customer engagement approach.
- MID modernisation work progress where the board were advised there were a small number of customer connections and a road crossing to be completed.

Feedback from customers have been positive in relation to modernisation works, but one customer has suggested that a conversation between SRW and the customer in relation to what on farm works they were planning would have been beneficial to ensure connections to on farm works were suitable.

- Main Northern Syphon Replacement has been completed and this piece of infrastructure replaces an asset that was run down and was a risk to supply for the customers on that pipeline. The benefit of replacing a syphon with a flume is to remove the restriction on the pipeline which improves service to customers.

The committee inquired as to how capital projects for asset replacements are considered including options considered and costs. Management advised that for this project, risk to staff safety, loss to head pressure and restriction to the system were considered by the operations and capital team.

- Demand for water has been higher this year, but to date delivery times have been met.
- Water Sales will take place this year, with the expectation there will be approximately 1000ML up for auction. The Managing Director **agreed** to report back to the committee as to who will be eligible to purchase water.
- Other items of the board agenda is EOFY items and board committee meeting outcomes.

Action	Action Officer	Due Date
Advise the MCCC as to who is eligible to purchase water through the Water Sales process	Cameron FitzGerald	13/10/2023

10. COMMITTEE MATTERS

10.1 Important issues from other customer committees

The Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum is scheduled to meeting in mid-September.

10.2 Matters referred to/by the Board/Board Committee

The Managing Director confirmed that he would present the agreed outcomes of the Customer Engagement Review discussion (agenda item 6.1) to the board at the September meeting.

11. General Business

Tour of Newry Modernisation Works – this tour will be scheduled at a later date, with Management to circulate some proposed dates.

12. Meeting evaluation

The members referred to the robust discussion and stated that the Chair ran the meeting well.

13. Next meeting

The next meeting of the Macalister Customer Consultative Committee will be scheduled for December 2023.

14. Close

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