Macalister Customer Consultative Committee

Minutes of Meeting 201 – Special meeting

Date	Time	Location
18 October 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, OAM	Committee Member
Mr Norm Drew	Committee Member
Mr Stephen Dwyer	Committee Member
In Attendance	
Mrs Joanne Butterworth-Gray	SRW Board Chair
Mr Cameron FitzGerald	Managing Director, SRW
Mr Simon Wilkinson	General Manager Service Delivery, SRW
Mr Matt Stagg	Acting Manager Water Supply East, SRW
Mrs Pam Crawford	Service Delivery Officer
Apologies	
Mr Kate Lamb	Committee Member
Ms Jeannette Howie	Committee Member
Absent	
Guests	

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. PRINCIPLE MATTERS – For discussion

3.1 Flood Debrief

- Mr FitzGerald began by explaining to the Committee that after each flood, there is a post action review. In the case of this flood, the review will be conducted independently.
- The review is to identify good practices as well as areas for improvement.
- The Committee was informed that SRW are responsible for water level management in Lake Glenmaggie and storing and releasing water for irrigators. Structure integrity is also a priority along with minimising downstream impacts.
- There is a limited ability to mitigate floods, as Lake Glenmaggie is a small storage on a big catchment.
- SRW track storage levels and make releases based on conditions. This is reviewed fortnightly.
- The Eastern Storages Flood Plan, details what happens when there is a flood. It is important to get this plan right which is why reviews occur.
- The October 2023 flood presented many challenges. For context, conditions for August were dry, with a seasonal outlook for continued dry conditions.
- Due to these dry conditions, a September 1st filling curve was chosen. In July it was decided to harvest all that is allowable.
- The start of the irrigation season saw record demand and Lake Glenmaggie had still not reached fill point at this stage.
- **Sunday 1st October 2023**
- Initial BoM forecast for 3rd to 5th October was for between 30-140mm rain.
- There was a high degree of uncertainty in the forecast hence the wide range.
- **Monday 2nd October 2023**
- BoM issues initial flood scenarios outlook.
- Most likely scenario was for no flooding on Macalister.
- Least likely scenario was for Moderate flood levels at Licola, Minor Flood Levels D/S of Glenmaggie.
- **Monday 2nd October 2023**
- Based on BoM scenarios, the results of 1st run of SRW flood forecasting model indicated:
    - 50% chance of no significant change in flow;
    - 25% chance of inflow peaking at 15,000ML/d;
    - For the most likely outcomes the inflow would be able to be absorbed with minimal impact downstream.

  - No need for a pre-release.
- **Tuesday 3rd October 2023**
- BoM issued updated rainfall forecast – now up to 120mm in the upper catchment but with chance of higher localised falls.
- BoM updated flood scenarios showing:
  - Most likely scenario was for Moderate Flood Levels at Licola, Minor Flood Levels D/S of Glenmaggie;
  - Least likely scenario was for Major Flood Levels at Licola, Minor Flood Levels D/S of Glenmaggie;
- SRW updated results from the flood forecasting model showed:
  - 50% chance no significant change to inflows;
  - 25% chance peak inflow of 22,000ML/d;
  - Release increased to 1,000ML/d to charge the river and give a platform to respond to inflows – noting airspace was still able to keep most likely scenarios to Minor Flood or below.
- **Wednesday 4th October 2023**
- Higher than forecast rainfall was now occurring.
- Release was increased to 2,000ML/d at 4am and to 5,500ML/d at 6am as upstream gauges started to rise.
- SRW ran the flood forecasting model at 6am which now included actual rainfall – reducing any uncertainty.
- Model results showed that the predicted inflow peak was now 53,000ML/d.
- Inflow and storage level started to rise approximately 9am.
- Releases were then increased throughout the day to run just behind increases in inflow.
- Mr FitzGerald confirmed that these scenarios were based on if SRW did nothing with the water in store at Lake Glenmaggie.
- An emergency warning was issued by VicEmergency mid afternoon on Wednesday 3rd November.

The Committee discussed:

  - Early warnings are essential and could have released more water, earlier. However SRW did everything right otherwise.
  - There is a need to test the communication between SRW & SES as there was a lot of confusion in the community.
  - Whilst SRW were able to moderate outflows with the airspace available, could have potentially created more space.
  - So long as the releases were less than inflows, making a minor flood rather than major, SRW did the right thing.
  - At this time of year, Glenmaggie isn't able to reduce flood peaks easily as it needs to be full for irrigation purposes. However, the number one priority should be to protect people. That's what the flood plan is for.
  - If Glenmaggie wasn't there, the flood would have happened regardless and would have been worse.
  - With some flood events, not a lot can be done.

- The flood water came out at different places to normal; this is a CMA issue as there is too much growth in rivers. Newry farmers are looking to clear problem areas in themselves, rather than waiting for funding.
- SRW did the right thing but the river behaved completely differently.
- It was commented that the CMA need to attend Flood Warden meetings to understand and know that their decisions cause some of the problems to property owners.
- The Flood Warden system was discussed. Mr FitzGerald said that the system would form part of the review.
- The use of the VicEmergency app was discussed. Mr FitzGerald said that findings from previous events was that warnings are to only come from the VicEmergency app.
- SRW made the decision to report releases on the SRW website. There is a need to get the VicEmergency app to a point where the most relevant information is being provided.

3.2 Independent post incident review

- Mr FitzGerald restated that there will be a post incident review conducted by an independent consultant.
- The Government want the VicEmergency app to be the source of truth, however the information needs to be accurate.
- The Committee was asked what the right mix of information is and it was discussed that customers need actual figures, inflows, outflows etc so they can make decisions.
- The Flood Warden system needs addressing as it is not working effectively. This will form part of the review.
- Property owners close to the release of water are the priority, as they have less time to prepare.

- The review process will be run independently, they will look at all SRW processes and ensure these were followed.
- The Committee commented that this review could be conducted in house, using SRW experience and knowledge. Mr FitzGerald said the consultant chosen will have a lot of experience in emergency management, who can look at our processes with fresh eyes.
- Members were asked to review the scope of the review and provide feedback if required.

4. Farewell to outgoing members

- Mr FitzGerald recognised and thanked outgoing members, Mr Graeme Anderson, OAM, Mrs Jeannette Howie and Mr Alan Clyne.
- Those present were given a certificate of appreciation and a letter from West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, who also expressed their gratitude.

Close

With there being no further business, the meeting closed at 11.35am.