

# Macalister Customer Consultative Committee

## Minutes of Meeting 203

Date	Time	Location
28 May 2024	10:00am	SRW Maffra Office

### Present

Mrs Kate Lamb	Committee Member
Mr Brad White	Committee Member (Chair)
Mr Christopher Van Den Dikkenberg	Committee Member
Mr James Clyne	Committee Member
Mr Mark Coleman	Committee Member (via MS Teams)
Mr Tim Missen	Committee Member
Mr Warrick Purdon	Committee Member
Mr Thomas Dwyer	Committee Member
Mr Bernard Coleman	Committee Member

### In Attendance

Mr Cameron FitzGerald	Managing Director, SRW
Mr Simon Wilkinson	General Manager Service Delivery, SRW
Mr Matt Cook	Manager Water Supply East, SRW
Ms Hayley Taylor	Executive Assistant, SRW (minutes)

### Apologies

Mr Benn Thexton	Committee Chair
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### Guests

Mr Matthew Stagg	Projects and Innovation Specialist
Mr Edward Smith	Manager Headworks Operations (for part)
Mr Scott Cornish	General Manager Asset Futures (for part)
Mr Lucas Snow	A/Manager Emergency Planning and Resilience (for part)

## 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 202

The minutes of meeting 202 were approved.

**Moved:** Tim Missen

**Second:** Warrick Purdon

It was noted Bernard Coleman did attend the February 2024 minutes, and they will be updated to reflect this.

## 5. Business Arising

The report was taken as read.

## 6. PRINCIPLE MATTERS – FOR NOTING

### 6.1 Water Supply East Update

The report was taken as read.

Management highlighted:

- An overview of the 2023/24 season will be provided at the August 2024 meeting.
- The 2023/24 season saw the largest delivery on record for both the first day and last day of the season.
- An auction to sell 100ML high reliability and 447 low reliability water will be held on 26 June 2024, and will be allocated for the start of the 2024/25 season.

SRW has communicated this auction via email, text, letters, public notices, social media, radio and newspapers.

Buyers are reminded to register as the auction will be held online.

WaterPartners are able to assist customers that do not feel comfortable using technology.

Management confirmed that the reserve price is not announced but is set to recover a portion of costs associated with modernisation. Any unsold water will be made available at the highest price from the most recent auction.

SRW's aim is to provide water to production in an orderly manner and can

consider temporary trades for the water sitting on the shelf. This option would be discussed with the MCCC beforehand. If temporary trading was to occur, SRW would expect it would be at the current market price.

The Committee highlighted recent communication with Newry Creek Customers and their access to the water. Management advised SRW had made a commitment to these customers that a certain amount of water would be made available to purchase at a shelf price (set at the maximum volumetric price paid at the last public auction), up to the limit of the volume of their current section 51 licences. This will be available for a transition period of 4 years to enable these customers to adapt to any potential impacts of less water losses flowing into the Newry creek as a result of modernisation pipelining works.

## 6.2 Communications Report

The report was taken as read.

The committee inquired whether farm outlets will be upgraded over the 2024 winter maintenance period. Management advised SRW will upgrade approximately 65 high usage outlets or as many outlets as the remainder of the 6B modernisation funding will allow.

The committee inquired as to whether SRW was considering modernising other areas of the district. Management discussed the MacFresh project, advised the work from the project will enable SRW to put forward well consider business cases that will support customers moving forward. The Manager Water Supply East highlighted that approximately 70% of the volume of water delivered in the MID is delivered through modernised infrastructure. The committee **requested** a presentation of the MacFresh project at the next meeting.

## 7. PRINCIPLE MATTERS – FOR DISCUSSION

### 7.1 HARC MID Operational Review

Mr Matthew Stagg, Project and Innovation Specialist provided a presentation on the HARC MID Operational Review, and provided an update on the short-term recommendations including:

- Weeds in channels:
  - Trial of new spray to be conducted over winter, which is safer than Magnacide H.
  - Team is using Magnacide H, mechanical clearing along with the new chemical trial, and YTD have undertaken weed clearing across 60% of the system.
- Orders delivered over the season:
  - There was an increase in orders delivered in the 2023/24 season compared to 2022/23 season with a high volume in the early part of 2024
  - Clarification was made that the data in relation to the number of orders held only accounts for orders that were attempted and rejected. SRW

was contacting and scheduling orders manually where possible to reduce wait times.

- Reviewing how the communications system in the district is working to ensure it is working efficiently. Management confirmed Node Towers have 4G SIM Cards and will continue to work when 3G is switched off.

To address issues that have arisen during periods of high demand SRW have:

- Reduced ordering lead time to 14 days,
- Increased weed spraying across the district to improve water flow,
- Undertaken reprofiling of channels,
- Updated the Weekly Snapshot at the request of the MCCC to make it more meaningful for customers.
- Commenced work to trial Customer Connect, a suite of software for customers and planners. Customers will be able to view more details regarding water availability. SRW are hoping to trial the software during the 2024/25 season with a small number of customers, with the intent to roll out the software the following season.

The committee discussed the possibility of on and off-peak rates and whether customers will order water overnight as more and more farms are automated and can therefore water overnight via their automated system.

The committee acknowledged that some customers need certain flow rates to operate their infrastructure, while others just need the volume of water to be delivered. Management advised as part of the development of the CustomerConnect tool, an option is being developed so customers can see the flow rate and will be able to schedule water for delivery at the desired flow rate. The committee discussed the Werribee Irrigation District system, where on farm storage is utilised, so those customers are more concerned about receiving the desired volume rather than a specific flow rate to operate their infrastructure.

The committee inquired whether there was a timeline for SRW to consider the option of delivery share for use as a demand management tool. Management advised this is a large piece of work, which will be run as a stand-alone project. It is expected that investigations will commence in the 2024/25 financial year to understand how delivery share could work in the MID, with case studies and model how demands on the system could affect customers being undertaken thereafter. The committee encouraged SRW to consider other options, rather than just restricting customers access to volumes of water.

The committee suggested MacFresh also considers the way the system operates, including choke points on the system. Management highlighted recent decision to replace siphons with flumes, and this work is setting the system up for the future, and SRW will continue to work to improve the system as infrastructure is replaced.

## 7.2 Outcome of the 2023 Flood Review

Mr Scott Cornish, General Manager Asset Futures, and Mr Edward Smith, Manager Headworks Operations join the meeting at 11:08am to discuss the 2023 Flood Review and draft recommendations. As part of the discussion Mr Smith provided an overview of the brief provided to the consultant, and provided information on SRW's Flood Management System, highlighting SRW's policies, plans and strategies which inform how SRW operates the system during flood events as well as how data is used to model different scenarios.

The draft findings of the review were discussed with the committee, with Management highlighting:

- Plans and Procedures are consistent with AIIMS, plans are comprehensive and well tested. It is important SRW follows AIIMS to ensure SRW can interact effectively with other agencies and the incident response team during an emergency response.
- The review indicated that BOM forecasts used by SRW to model the event, indicated there was adequate airspace in the dam to absorb the inflows.
- Early stand-up of an IMT and operations is important to minimise impacts downstream.
- SRW should consider staff training requirements, to ensure there are adequate staff available during an event.
- Record keeping could be improved, with the report recommending minute taking is more widely implemented, the Incident Action Plan's are updated more frequently, and flood release decisions are recorded separately to individual's incident logs.
- Frequency of inflow calculations were considered, with the report recommending they are not calculated more frequently than two hourly, and other data models are utilised to cross check predicated inflows.
- Options to improve systems should be considered to allow for faster scenario modelling.
- SRW should join the BoM Teams chat.
- Investigate options of more efficient technical solutions for communications.

Next Steps for SRW:

- Finalise report
- Develop an Improvement Action Plan. SRW will consult with the MCCC as part of the development of the action plan. '

Management invited the committee to provide comment on the information presented and ask any clarifying questions. The committee inquired:

- What is SRW's aim in regard to the water level of Glenmaggie Weir at the end of a flood event?

Management advised that while the aim is to have a full storage at the end of a flood event, SRW may make an operational decision to hold a small volume of space and fill the storage over the next 10 – 15 days. SRW could also

make a decision to lower the full supply level for a period of time, if continued rain is expected, which will allow for a small amount of additional airspace to absorb inflows. SRW's objective is to not over-top the gates, as there is risk of catastrophic failure of the dam.

- Does SRW have the resources available to implement recommendations around staffing?  
Management confirmed that the organisation is looking to expand cross-training of headworks operators, so they can operate multiple sites and utilising ex-headworks staff working elsewhere in the business during a flood event.
- What will be done in regard to downstream notifications and warnings?  
Management advised as part of the action plan, SRW will review the flood warden system, and look at options to utilise current technology to assist with downstream notifications. Any notification system needs to be able to provide the same information to all people. The committee stated the text messages sent to people during the last flood were helpful, and encouraged SRW to make sure there is consistent messaging from all agencies to minimise the risk of confusion for the community.
- Has the clean-up of the waterways been considered as part of the review?  
Management advised activities such as clearing of waterways is the responsibility of the relevant Catchment Management Authority and a meeting was held with the community and CMA, with SRW in attendance, after the flood events. During the meeting the CMA committed to work with the community in regard to clearing the waterways.

### 7.3 Board Update

Mr Cameron FitzGerald, Managing Director advised recent board discussions included;

- HARC MID Operational Review
- Blue Rock Carbon Reforestation Offset Project (CROP) – there was community concern regarding the bushfire risk if carbon offset planting was to occur. SRW has spoken with the community and made commitments to further consultation.
- Cyber Security – SRW is working to comply with the Government's Essential 8 Framework. SRW has reached maturity on five out of eight essential requirements and is working to finalise the last three.
- Electrical incident at Glenmaggie – a switchboard fault was found at Glenmaggie. SRW have undertaken an audit of switchboards across the business and rectification works are underway to ensure the fault cannot occur again. Work on critical infrastructure is completed, and other sites are tagged out until they can be fixed.
- Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum – the SGRF discussed barriers to trading groundwater entitlements in the south-west of the state, as a result of a recent project which was commissioned to look at ways to enhance trading in the area to get more water into production. The feedback from the SGRF was that education is important, so customers understand how trading, including temporary trading works.

- 3/4 Bench – negotiations are nearing completion between irrigators, Traditional Owners and the Environment for a share of the 16GL of water entitlements from the Latrobe 3/4 Bench. SRW will need to determine how any entitlement will be licenced, but the water will be sold. Management advised mine rehabilitation is considered as a separate matter and the 16GL is not impacted by the filling of the mine voids.

## **8. COMMITTEE MATTERS**

### **8.1 Important issues from other customer committees**

Refer to agenda item 7.3

### **8.2 Matters referred to/by the Board/Board Committee**

Refer to agenda item 7.3

### **8.3 2024 Committee workplan**

The workplan was taken as read.

## **9. General Business**

Off-season access to stock and domestic water (Kate Lamb) – a district customer had raised a question regarding off-season access to stock and domestic water and whether there would be future opportunities to access stock and domestic water year-round. Management advised water is available during the season, but at this time it is not possible to keep water in the system over winter as it affects maintenance activities.

Upcoming Chair and Deputy Chair Appointments – Management advised an election for the Chair and Deputy Chair positions will be held at the August 2024 meeting. Nominations can be submitted prior to the meeting, as well as being accepted on the day. The process is outlined in the Customer Consultative Committee Handbook.

Email billing – Management confirmed a project is underway to enable SRW to issue electronic bills, and a preferred supplier has been selected. SRW is working with the supplier to have an e-billing option for the 2024 bills. As part of the roll-out SRW are working with the supplier to ensure customer privacy is maintained so that only the person authorised to have access to the bill receives it.

## **10. Meeting evaluation**

It was confirmed that MCCC meetings are held in person, commencing at 10am. The room will be open from 9.30am for morning tea.

Meetings are scheduled quarterly, and if required, additional meetings can be scheduled to deal with pressing issues.

## **11. Next meeting**

The next meeting of the Macalister Customer Consultative Committee is scheduled for 27 August 2024.

## **12. Close**

With no further business the meeting was declared closed at 12:15pm.