

Macalister Customer Consultative Committee

Minutes of Meeting 204

Date	Time	Location
27 August 2024	10:00am	SRW Maffra Office

Present

Mr Benn Thexton	Committee Chair
Mrs Kate Lamb	Committee Member
Mr Brad White	Committee Member
Mr Christopher Van Den Dikkenberg	Committee Member
Mr Mark Coleman	Committee Member
Mr Tim Missen	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 James Clyne	Committee Member
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Absent

Mr Warrick Purdon	Committee Member
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Guests

Mr Matthew Stagg	Projects and Innovation Specialist, SRW
Mr Matt Weatherall	Program Lead MID, SRW
Mr Peter Hahnemann	Project Manager Macalister Fresh

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 203

The minutes of meeting 203 were approved.

Moved: Brad White **Second:** Chris Van Den Dikkenberg

5. Business Arising

The report was taken as read.

6. Committee Appointment

SRW representatives left the room, and the committee undertook a vote for the Chair and Deputy Chair committee positions in which Mr Benn Thexton was reappointed Chair of the Committee and Mr Chris Van Den Dikkenberg was appointed Deputy Chair of the committee for the next 12 months.

7. GUEST SPEAKER

7.1 Winter Modernisation Works

Mr Matt Weatherall, Program Lead MID joined the meeting at 10:09am and provided the committee with an overview of the modernisation works that have been completed over the 2024 winter maintenance period highlighting:

- Works nearing completion on modernising approximately 80 customer outlets. Upon completion, this will mean 70% of district water will be delivered through an automated outlet. The outlets targeted for upgrade are based on volume. After these works are completed, approximately 1500 outlets are left to be modernised. These outlets are low flow or not utilised outlets. . A committee member advised one of his outlets, that had been removed was still showing on WaterLine. Details were taken and the Manager Water Supply East agreed to follow-up offline.
- It costs approximately \$50 – \$60k to modernise an outlet.
- The new outlet involves the installation of a Rubicon slip meter product which is placed in the Detheridge wheel emplacement with works being undertaken around the outlet to make the surrounding structure fit for purpose.

- There were Grinding Stones found during the modernisation works. The committee discussed the requirements of cultural heritage management plans and how SRW and GLaWAC worked together to ensure the stones were safely removed from the site.
- In addition to regulator replacements, SRW has replaced two road crossing and a syphon. The road crossing replacements are a good outcome for operators as there is now less requirement to drive along channel banks.
- Majority of the works this winter have been completed by McInnes Earthmoving (McInnes), through a competitive tender process. Works were packaged into projects, allowing SRW to choose best value for customers across the four packages.
- Existing easements covering old channel alignments are being removed and new easements are being created for the pipeline. A committee member enquired where the soil for the decommissioning works came from. The member stated that two landholders had reuse dams constructed, with the soil being used in decommissioning works. SRW advised the contractors were responsible for acquiring the soil, which could have included private arrangements with local landowners. SRW was not privy to these arrangements.
- Four aging Flume Gates were replaced during winter works after a 12 – 15 year lifespan during the winter works. The committee enquired as to what parts of the gates tend to fail and were advised that while some parts of the gates such as the gearbox and motors can be reconditioned if they fail, when the gate itself delaminates, it requires replacement. The new gates have separate panels whereby if one panel delaminates that panel can be replaced without having to replace the entire gate. In most cases the concrete is in good condition and the gate itself just needs to be replaced.

A member enquired as to whether there is a program to calibrate meters. SRW advised that it uses patten approved meters which are calibrated on installation and tested at specified timeframes.

The Committee thanked Mr Weatherall for the presentation.

Mr Weatherall left the meeting at 10:39am.

8. PRINCIPAL MATTERS – FOR NOTING

8.1 Water Supply East Update

The report was taken as read.

Management highlighted:

- 142,000ML of water was delivered during the 2023/24 season
- A 5% increase to High Reliability Water Supply (HRWS) was announced on 27 August 2024. HRWS now sit at 85%. This is a good position for this time of year, and SRW are expecting to see demand for water in the next few weeks.

- Kellie Massouras has been appointed, Manager Emergency Planning and Risk, and will be holding a meeting with all Flood Wardens in the coming month. Ms Massouras will be invited to a future MCCC meeting.
- SRW recently undertook a water auction, with all lots being sold. Outcomes of the auction are published on the SRW website. The Managing Director discussed the funding arrangements for modernisation (federal, state and customer funded).
- For any future project proposals seeking funding from the Federal Government via the National Water Grid, it is expected that it will be a 50/50 split for funding between the Federal Government and irrigators. The allocation of any water saving will be dictated by the government of the day, and at this point the Federal Government allocation will go toward the environment and traditional owners.
- SRW's Zero Tolerance approach to water theft is being supported by more staff undertaking compliance training.

8.2 Communications Report

The report was taken as read.

The quarterly newsletter will be published in September 2024.

SRW has been publishing case studies on the website and social media about how modernisation works have impacted farming operations.

9. PRINCIPLE MATTERS – FOR DISCUSSION

9.1 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 works completed over the winter period to improve the system. Highlights of the discussion included:

- 16km of channel cleaning was completed across the main channels in the system. The committee reported that the contractors did a great job, giving landholders a lot of notice, and not leaving any waste. McInnes also found a sinkhole when cleaning out a channel and fixed this as part of their works. The committee was complementary on the way McInnes had handled the works and communicated with customers. It was **agreed** a letter would be sent to McInnes on behalf of the MCCC (signed by the Chair) noting the positive experience McInnes provided customers.
- Re-tuning work has been undertaken across the channels that have been cleaned to re-balance the control system. This task is completed by timing the flows from gate to gate. This ensures a smooth supply level in the channel and increases throughput. Rubicon undertake tuning activities for SRW, with most of the tuning undertaken remotely.
- The use of the herbicide Payload was used to spray in channel weeds in the district, with 39.79km sprayed in the 2023/24 year. SRW have purchased a

spray truck to assist with weed control. The truck is utilised where SRW can get access via tracks, otherwise handguns are used.

- SRW have undertaken work on the communications network to expand its capacity, including installation of a new tower at Velencia Creek. Rubicon is undertaking analysis and will report to SRW on targeted areas to improve the system.
- SRW is upgrading its radio links will improve the speed of signals between sites.

The committee noted the need to continue work on the options identified in the HARC operational review to continue addressing how the system can meet customer needs in high demand periods. Macalister Fresh project update

Action	Action Officer	Due Date
Prepare a letter to be sent to McInnes Contractors on behalf of the MCCC (signed by the Chair) noting the positive experience McInnes provided customers.	H. TAYLOR	10/10/2024

9.2 Macalister Fresh Project Update

MCCC representatives involved in the Macalister Fresh project discussed the project with the committee highlighting:

- GLaWAC representatives attended the last meeting, and it was interesting to hear their representative as to how they see they will use water.
- Discussed projects that are a focus of SRW, including the MacAvon project and the Latrobe 3 / 4 bench.
- From an irrigator's perspective, irrigators need more detail to understand how expansion into a new area would impact current users, and the cost associated with expanding the district and customers need assurance that delivery would not be compromised.
- Irrigators on the Latrobe are expected to have access to more water through the shared reallocation of the 3/4 Bench.

The committee discussed the importance of having a vision for future generations that has been tested and the concept is accepted by stakeholders as widely as possible.

SRW discussed the importance of communication in regard to the potential expansion of the district over the Avon, addressing three key areas of supply, cost and availability. The project will need to prove to the existing customer base that the water is actually available during a normal season, not just available on paper. The Managing Director expressed that existing customers must be better off, and new customers if expansion was to occur, would need to buy into the system, and money from this would be reinvested into improving the whole

system. SRW is expecting to save 50GL through the whole modernisation program, with previous studies indicating 20GL could be utilised in the current district. As an update to the initiative:

- Currently there is approx. 160 project concepts that have been put forward by stakeholders.
- The MacAvon project is progressing with investigations into the demand for water, and appetite for costs associated with expanding the district.
- There is expansion of industries occurring in the district (ie. Poultry), with additional infrastructure being built including power generation, and waste products being repurposed into high value products which is an alternative water sources, and the creation of high value fertiliser.

Other project idea's discussed through MacFresh include on farm irrigation practices, minimise discharge into drains, salinity issues. The project team and stakeholders have discussed what they consider to be the measurements of success (success metrics). The next workshop will explore this further.

It was **agreed** notes from stakeholders reference group would be shared with the committee.

It was **agreed** an update from the project group would be provided in 12 months to show what has been achieved.

Action	Action Officer	Due Date
Notes from the MacFresh stakeholders reference group to be shared with the committee.	H. TAYLOR	10/10/2024
An update from the MACFresh project group to be provided in August 2025 to inform the MCCC what has been achieved.	H. TAYLOR	10/10/2024

9.3 Board Update

Mr Cameron FitzGerald, Managing Director advised recent board discussions included a focus on Financial and Annual Reporting to the government, which includes reporting on frameworks from the government. This reporting ensures that SRW is meeting the expectations of government and ensuring that SRW is a sustainable business.

10.COMMITTEE MATTERS

10.1 Important issues from other customer committees

Werribee Customer Reference Group for Werribee Recycled Water Project has met four times, to assist in creating a business case for government funding for the project. SRW is working with customers to understand their needs and develop relationships.

The Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum talked at length about forestry, the lack of regulation for water use for plantations and the impact this has on irrigators. SRW will continue to advocate for a robust, fair and equitable sharing of water resources for all water users including the forestry sector.

10.2 Matters referred to/by the Board/Board Committee

Nil to report

10.3 2024 Committee workplan

The workplan was taken as read.

11. General Business

Removal of channel banks – Thomas Dwyer

Mr Dwyer advised three farmers have requested an evaluation of whether some landholders have removed both banks of decommissioned channels as part of the decommissioning works. They are concerned that the requirements of decommissioning may not have been adhered to. It was **agreed** that the matter would be referred to the Modernisation project team to follow-up with the landowners.

Action	Action Officer	Due Date
Referred to the Modernisation project team to follow-up with the landowners to determine whether there has been an unauthorised removal both banks of decommissioned channels as part of decommissioning works.	M. COOK	10/10/2024

E-billing – Tomas Dwyer

Mr Dwyer enquired about the roll out of an E-billing option. The Managing Director advised he is hopeful that an e-billing solution will be in place for this year. The project team is still working through some privacy concerns before it can be implemented.

Text messaging for irrigators on the Macalister during flood events – Thomas Dwyer

The Managing Director advised this communication review is part of the work the new Manager Emergency Planning and Risk is undertaking with the Flood Wardens and Ms Massouras will be invited to the next meeting to discuss her work in this area. SRW require the communications review to consider how to ensure that everyone who needs to get a message in regard to flood warnings gets a message.

12. Meeting evaluation

The members commented that the reports presented were informative.

13. Next meeting

The next meeting of the Macalister Customer Consultative Committee is scheduled for Tuesday 26 November 2024.

14. Close

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