

SGRF AGENDA

Meeting no. 55

9.30am, Friday 15 November 2024
The Hub, 555 Collins ExChange

*'We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we are meeting.
We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present, and the Elders from other communities
who may be here today.'*



**Southern
Rural Water**

Managing Water. Serving Communities.

Our Vision

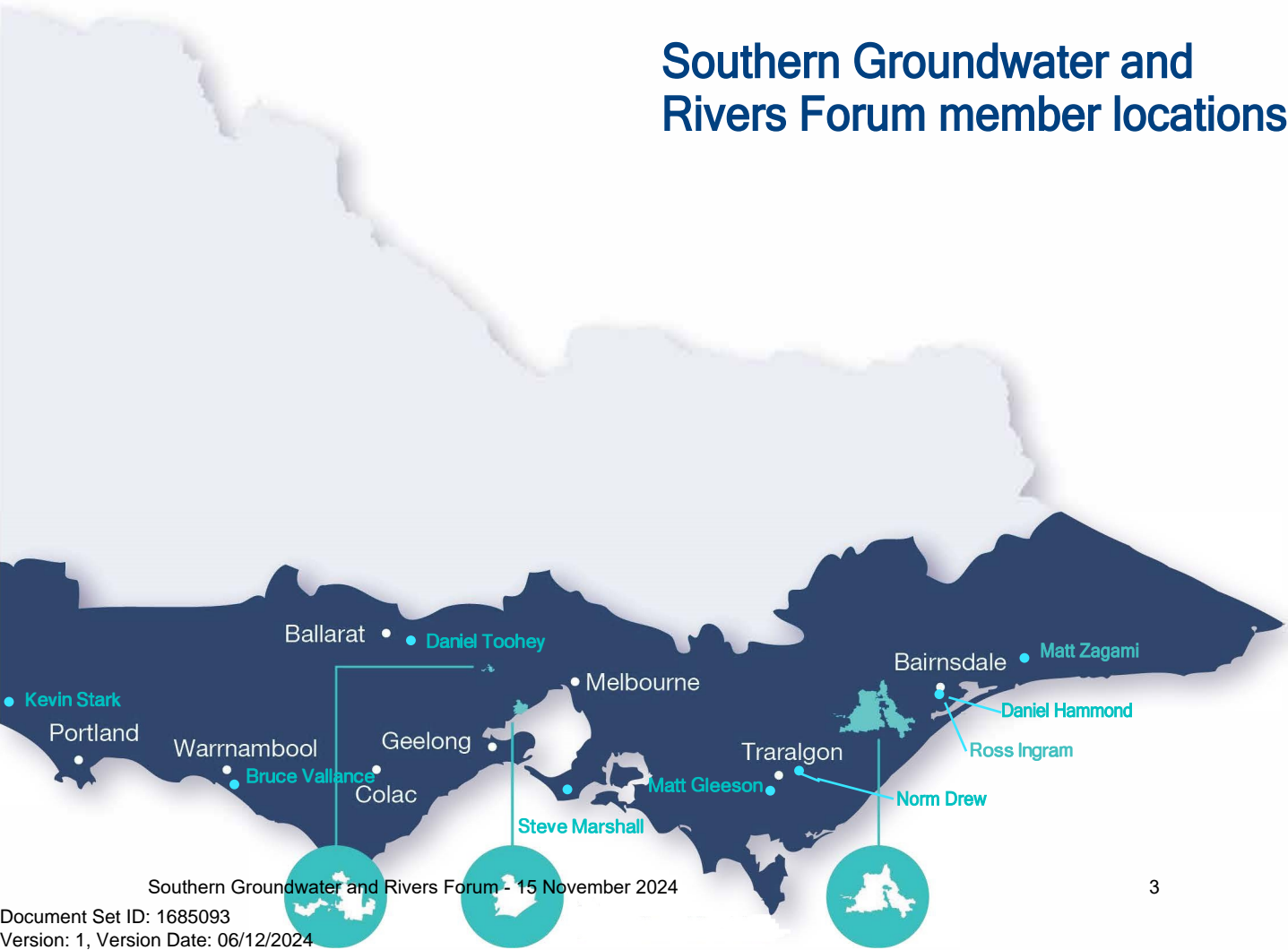
Great value for customers and community through excellence in rural water management



Our Trademark Values

We are Always Safe and Accountable working as One Team to deliver a lasting Legacy.

Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum member locations



Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum - 15 November 2024

Southern Rural Water's Groundwater and Rivers Strategic Focus Areas

June 2024 - June 2025

There are five strategic focus areas for SRW in the Groundwater and Rivers area over the next 12 months:

1. Continued advocacy for sustainable access to water for irrigators via the implementation of GM2030, policy reforms in surface water management and key stakeholder groups.
2. Continue to encourage a flexible trading market through improved internal procedures and Government policies.
3. Provide more real time information for customers on water usage following the integration of meter reading data with mySRW portal to improve decision making.
4. Undertake more detailed water resource assessment across our systems through investment of unregulated water sales funds and the continuation of the Supply/Demand projects.
5. Understanding the implications of rapidly evolving cultural water policy on customer aspirations for improved access to water.

An update on what SRW is doing in relation to these focus areas is provided in the Groundwater and Rivers Update at each meeting.

Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum

Meeting 55

Date	Time	Location
15 November 2024	9.30am – 12.00pm	The Hub - 555 Collins ExChange

Topic			
1		Acknowledgement of County	Chair
2		Welcome and Apologies	Chair
3		Declaration of conflicts of interest	All
4		Confirmation of minutes – Meeting 54	Chair
	4.1	Attachment – Draft Minutes SGRF Meeting 54, 2 August 2024	
5		Business Arising	Chair
	5.1	Attachment - Business arising from previous meetings	
6		<u>PRINCIPAL MATTERS – FOR DISCUSSION</u>	
	6.1	Roundtable discussion: - Regional highlights, issues and opportunities in each members area. - What should SRW be mindful of leading into summer?	Chair to lead, all members
	6.2	Groundwater and Rivers update - including discussion on key focus area's.	Simon Wilkinson
	6.3	Compliance uplift update	Simon Wilkinson
	6.4	Small Farm Dams – project update	Matt Hudson
	6.5	Trade Platform – project update	Clinton Hartley
	6.6	Distribution options for water from 3/4 Bench	Terry Flynn
7		<u>PRINCIPAL MATTERS – FOR NOTING</u>	
	7.1	Communications report	
8		<u>COMMITTEE MATTERS</u>	
	8.1	Important issues from other customer committees	Cameron FitzGerald

	8.2	Matters referred to the Board/board committee	Cameron FitzGerald
	8.3	2025 Committee workplan	
	8.4	2025 meeting schedule	
9		<u>GENERAL BUSINESS</u> - Water usage and trading in Orbost region (Matt Z)	All
10		Meeting evaluation	
11		Next meeting	
12		Close	12.00pm

A networking lunch will be served at the conclusion of the meeting.

Item No: 1

Subject: **Acknowledgement of Country**

'We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we are meeting. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present, and the Elders from other communities who may be here today.'

Item No: 2

Subject: **Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair will welcome attendees and note any apologies for this meeting.

Item No: 3

Subject: **Declaration of Conflicts of Interest**

The Chair will ask forum members to declare any conflicts of interest relating to the business of this meeting.

Item No: 4
Subject: Confirmation of minutes – Meeting 54
Action: For approval
Author: Hayley Taylor – Executive Assistant
Date: 31/10/2024

PURPOSE

1. To ensure that the minutes taken of committee meeting 54 are an accurate and sufficient record of discussions held and decisions made at the meeting.

RECOMMENDATION: That the committee approves the minutes of meeting 54 held on Friday 2 August 2024.

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE CONSIDERATIONS

2. Minutes are confirmed at each committee meeting.

BACKGROUND

3. Draft minutes are circulated after each committee meeting. Any suggested changes are captured as track changes, for consideration and confirmation at the following meeting.

REPORT

4. Draft minutes of meeting 54, held online via MS Teams, on Friday 2 August 2024 are provided in attachment 4.1.
5. **Budget impact:** Nil
6. **Link to strategy:** Nil.
7. **Risk:** Committee meeting minutes are a public record and may be subject to release under Freedom of Information. Directors should ensure that minutes accurately and appropriately reflect the discussion and decisions of the meeting.

NEXT STEPS

Who	Action
Meeting Secretary	Once confirmed, the minutes will be saved in Southern Rural Water's document management system and Southern Rural Water's Website.

Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum

Minutes of Meeting 54

Date	Time	Location
2 August 2024	9:00am	via MS Teams

Present

Mr Ross Ingram	Chair
Mr Bruce Vallance	Forum Member/Deputy Chair
Mr Daniel Hammond	Forum Member
Mr Matt Gleeson	Forum Member
Mr Norm Drew	Forum Member
Mr Daniel Toohey	Forum Member
Mr Kevin Stark	Forum Member
Mr Matt Zagami	Forum Member

In Attendance

Mr Cameron FitzGerald	Managing Director, SRW
Dr Jane Doolan	Board Director, SRW
Mr Simon Wilkinson	General Manager Service Delivery, SRW
Ms Penny Winbanks	Manager Statutory Functions, SRW
Ms Hayley Taylor	Executive Assistant, SRW (minutes)

Apologies

Mr Steven Marshall	Forum Member
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Guests

Mr Matthew Hudson	Principal Hydrogeologist, SRW
Mr Russell Tomlin	Manager Groundwater and Rivers Operations and Compliance, SRW

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 53

The minutes of meeting 53 held on 3 May 2024 were **approved**.

Moved: Matt Gleeson

Second: Norm Drew

5. Business Arising

The report was taken as read. The status comments were noted, and Management confirmed the Strategic Futures forum would be going ahead in 2024, but in a different format to 2023. The committee will be advised of the details once they have been confirmed.

6. PRINCIPLE MATTERS – for discussion

6.1 Groundwater and Rivers update

The report was taken as read.

The committee inquired about the following items:

Moorabool Dams investigation.

Management provided clarity in regard to how different enforcement notices relate to sections of the Water Act and how they are issued when there are contraventions of the Water Act.

The committee inquired as to how the dams were identified. Management advised the People for a Living Moorabool (PaLM) provided the results of an investigation undertaken by the group identifying dams on waterways in the region. A focus of the group is the management of water in the area and ensuring that dams are compliant.

SRW has worked through the list of all of the dams, identifying dams that were domestic and stock, dams, instances where SRW had received the appropriate applications and dams that were potentially non-compliant and required further investigation. From those dams that required further investigation SRW has worked diligently through the list, to determine what further action is required and has issued enforcement notices where breaches of the Water Act are found.

SRW's focus on compliance includes a fair, appropriate and clear application of the Water Act. To enable this SRW now has two managers to provide separation between SRW's role in compliance/enforcement and licencing/application assessment activities.

South-West Limestone Barriers to Trade project

SRW is working with the consultant to finalise the report, and a range of recommendations have been endorsed by the SRW Executive Team, which will be actioned immediately. These include actions improvement in communications and engagement on water trading and the potential trial of a trading platform. Management acknowledged the current dry conditions in the south-west and SRW is focusing on providing assistance to those customers, including linking them with other services, and working with customers in the area to overcome barriers to access water.

Traditional Owner applications

SRW is working with GLaWAC to assess applications for the Albert and Franklin Rivers. An EOI will be undertaken for irrigators or other consumptive users to understand requirements for water use from all potential users, as required by the Water Act.

Mitchell River Management Plan Project

The Chair advised he and another forum member had been approached to provide input into the project and expressed that SRW needed to consult with all customers affected by the project, not just large irrigators on the Mitchell River. The members approached advised they do not have a view on who does or doesn't utilise Sales Water and don't want to assume to know how other customers use the water. The Managing Director acknowledged to comments, and advised SRW will work through the practical issues and what a transition could look like if there is a change to current practice and will ensure the wording of draft report is reflective of conversations with stakeholders.

6.2 Compliance and Enforcement

Mr Russell Tomlin, Manager Groundwater and Rivers Operations and Compliance provided a presentation on compliance and enforcement activities undertaken in the last 12 months, highlighting:

- End of season meter reading activities have concluded with a number of instances of overuse detected. Where there were cases of overuse, a warning letter was issued and SRW engaged with customers to provide education on obligations to comply with licence conditions.
- SRW's Zero Tolerance to water theft approach and enforcement action available to SRW to address instances of non-compliance, and the importance of education and providing information to customers on their obligations.

- Building capacity across the organisation in regard to staff's investigative and enforcement capacity, including training, best practice note taking and introduction of tools to support staff.

The attendees discussed messaging and communications to customers regarding Zero Tolerance including:

- customers feel that there is a bit of a grey regarding obligations and SRW need to continue with the strong messaging regarding zero tolerance to ensure customers have every opportunity to be aware of their obligations.
- AMR data logging devices – SRW is undertaking work to review the project to ensure the most appropriate devices are installed, as through manual reading, some issues have been identified regarding data quality, especially in remote areas. The members encouraged SRW to look at the installation of the devices to ensure they are stable and well attached to the meter. Members advised some irrigators had reported some new meters are running faster than previous meters and Management advised SRW staff can come out on site and undertake maintenance to ensure the meter is calibrated correctly. All new meters are AS4747 compliant meters and are under warranty.
- Education regarding meter reading (including how customer can read their own meters) or mid-year updates on usage to help licence holders remain compliant would be beneficial. The committee suggested this could include emails when customers have used a certain percentage of their allocation, for example an email notification at 70% usage would give customers time to trade if they expected they would need more water or to dry off land. The mySRW website currently does not provide this service. Ideally customers would like to be able to use technology to be able to monitor this usage in a meaningful way. Management acknowledged that as part of the engagement plan SRW need to consider how information can be communicated to customers in a meaningful way. The committee expressed that customers value speaking with and seeing field officers, reporting positive interactions with SRW staff, and these are very beneficial interactions which should not be lost with the introduction of digital meter reads.

Mr Tomlin provided an overview on the focus areas for the next 12 months:

- Catchment based investigation to commence in the Mornington Peninsula.
- Potentially Hazardous Dams inspections to be completed by 30 September 2024.
- Expand compliance and enforcement across the whole business.
- Education – engage with customers and create education material to support customers with complying with their licence conditions.
- Meter reading improvements.

The committee discussed the focus area and provided the following commentary:

- It is positive that customers are being supported and educated in how to trade.
- It is the responsibility of water users to ensure they do not go over their limits, and trade needs to occur before overuse occurs Trade is not a solution to bring licence holders back into compliance. Education materials should include:
 - when to trade,
 - how to manage their water, and
 - what options are available to customers that want to access more water.
- there were no other catchments identified by the committee where a catchment based investigation should be prioritised.

The committee inquired who customers should contact regarding trade options. Management advised customers should contact their local field officer in the first instance as they will usually know who has water to trade and whether the trade is allowed under policy.

The committee inquired why the Water Register was not accessible. Management advised the public can search some details in the register, such as licences within a catchment region and for more detailed information people can apply for an Information Statement, but Field Staff can bridge that information gap for customers looking to trade, while maintaining appropriate privacy controls.

Management inquired whether there was any appetite from customers to undertake their own mid-year reads and provide the reading to SRW. The committee advised there was no appetite for this, highlighting issues around data integrity, and if SRW undertakes the reads, it is less likely they would be contested. The committee highlighted it would be helpful if customers were able to access their water usage online and SRW could consider undertaking mid-season reads, rather than mid-year reads as it could provide customers with a more accurate account of their water usage during the season.

The committee thanked Mr Tomlin for the presentation.

6.3 Small Farm Dams – Project update

Mr Matthew Hudson, Principal Hydrogeologist, SRW joined the meeting at 10:26am and provided an update on the Small Farms Dam project highlighting:

- This is a DEECA funded project which originated from the Central Gippsland Sustainable Water Strategy (CGSWS), action 4-13: Review of water resource risk in small, dry, peri-urban catchment. project focus on the upper Maribyrnong and upper Moorabool catchments, but the recommendations may be relevant to other catchments.
- Peri Urban catchments are facing unique challenges such as:
 - Changing land use

- Climate change
- Small catchment unlicensed dams
- Stock and domestic – unlicensed bores and surface water extraction
- Licensed take
- SRW have appointed Alluvium and HARC to deliver the project, with the project to:
 - Identify the extent and impact of unlicensed take
 - Engage with community and stakeholder groups
 - Assess the risk to key catchment values including cultural, environmental and economic factors.
- Timeframes:
 - The project is expected to be completed by December 2025.
 - A stakeholder reference group will be established by September 2024, with a communication and engagement plan currently being developed which will aim to ensure all stakeholders have an opportunity to be represented as part of the project.

The committee thanked Mr Hudson for the presentation and encouraged SRW to be aware of unintended consequences and how they could impact water users, and they look forward to seeing the data from the project.

7. PRINCIPLE MATTERS – FOR NOTING

7.1 Communications Report

The report was taken as read.

8. COMMITTEE MATTERS

8.1 Important issues from other customer committees

Mr Cameron FitzGerald, Managing Director, SRW advised:

The recent MCCC meeting focused on:

- flood management and improving communications with customers. Mr Drew advised there has been positive interactions with SRW's new Manager Emergency Planning and Risk and The Irrigator Reference Group of which Mr Drew is a member, had discussed the floods including the importance of consistent messaging on flows, and river heights above the dams, which is consistent with feedback from the MCCC. The sentiment from both groups is for SRW to move to technology based communications to expand messaging and ensuring there is a single source of information.
- In the Thomson Macalister Irrigation Area, there was a period of high demand from January 2024 due to 100% entitlement in mid-January. This meant customers had their full entitlement available, and therefore everyone wanted all their water at once. The MCCC and SRW talked at length regarding the

protocols implemented to ensure fair access to water, and a project is now underway that is looking out how to best manage the operation of the system during periods of high demand.

Werribee Reconfiguration Project– SRW is meeting with customers and stakeholders to work through this project and explore options of providing better quality recycled water to the Werribee district. Customers on the committee are engaged with the project and will continue to work with the group to further develop the idea.

8.2 Matters referred to/by the Board/Board Committee

Dr Doolan, Board Director advised that the following feedback would be provided to the board:

- SRW is encouraged to look at how trading is supported in the South-West, especially considering the current dry conditions.
- Mitchell River Management Review needs to ensure there are options for engagement with all irrigations to be consulted as part of the project.
- There is strong support from the committee in regard to SRW's Zero Tolerance approach to water theft. The committee expressed to SRW, the importance of education, providing usage information to customers, encourage customers to monitor their own usage, to ensure they remain compliant. To support this the mySRW website needs a 'tune-up' to ensure information provided to customers is current.
- Face to face engagement with field officers is very important to customers.
- Education, including water trading should be a focus, and education will support customers to remain compliant.
- There is ongoing interest in the Small Farms Dams Project, including potential outcomes regarding policy responses.

Dr Doolan advised that the board will continue to advocate for a robust, fair and equitable sharing of water resources for all water users including the forestry sector. A member advised water run-off is drying up as plantations are absorbing water before it reaches the river. Landholders are concerned they will be impacted rapidly if there isn't regulation, and it is already starting to effect users. The member commented plantations have a far greater effect on catchments than farm dams.

8.3 2024 Committee workplan

The committee **noted** the 2024 committee workplan.

9. General Business

The Chair called for any items of General Business.

Contact details for customers

The committee inquired whether Waterline usernames could be changed to email addresses and whether a request for updated contact information could be sent with

the bills to prompt customers to provide email addresses to SRW. The committee expressed that they would like to see all communications from SRW to be distributed electronically, including bills. Management advised that an E-billing solution is imminent and a challenge for SRW has been ensuring customer privacy is maintained and this has been worked through as part of the e-billing project.

Use of consultants

It was expressed that some members would like to see SRW have the internal capability to undertake projects and there is some concern that consultants do not fully understand the issues of SRW customers.

Torquay Dam

Management advised the dam is fully decommissioned as it was deemed an unacceptable risk to public safety. This work has meant that SRW has reviewed other dams near developments and has undertaken action to decommission one other dam that was been deemed an unacceptable risk to public safety.

Mitchell River Winter Fill Auction and Licencing

A member advised they, and some other customers had not received their licence from the Auction. Management confirmed that the majority of licences have been issued, with a handful remaining were SRW is working with the CMA to ensure the appropriate plans have been submitted. The committee encouraged SRW to learn from this procedural issue and ensure the process is clear for any future sales as it was reported that this is the second time delays have occurred when issuing these types of licences. Management **agreed** to follow-up on the status of outstanding licences from this auction.

2025 Corporate Plan

Management advised the 2025 Corporate Plan has been accepted and **confirmed** a link will be sent to the committee with the minutes.

South-West Limestone

A member advised landholders in the area want to reduce red tape regarding putting farm dams in and some landholder still want to put dams on water ways.

Action	Action Officer	Due Date
Provide the link to the 2025 Corporate Plan to members when the draft minutes of the August 2024 SGRF meeting are distributed	H. TAYLOR	16/08/2024
Follow-up status of outstanding licences from the Mitchell River Winterfill Auction.	P. WINBANKS	16/08/2024

10. Meeting evaluation

The Chair sought feedback on the effectiveness of this meeting and the members agreed that the conduct of the meeting had been positive and useful.

11. Next meeting

The next meeting of the Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum will be held on Friday 15 November 2024, face to face, in Melbourne. The committee expressed that they would like the venue to be close to Southern Cross Station.

12. Close

With no further business the meeting was declared closed at 11:17am.

Item No: 5
Subject: **Business arising from previous meetings**
Action: **For noting**
Author: **Hayley Taylor – Executive Assistant**
Date: **8/11/2024**

PURPOSE

1. To allow the forum to assess management progress on items identified for action from Southern Groundwater and River Forum meetings.

RECOMMENDATION: That the forum **notes** the status of business arising action items, including:

- one action item has been completed,
- one action item will remain open until the date of the Strategic Futures Forum has been confirmed, and
- one action item is listed as overdue.

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE CONSIDERATIONS

2. Business arising is considered each meeting.

BACKGROUND

3. Actions are captured in the minutes each month and transposed into risk wizard where base and aspirational dates are added along with the responsibility for completion.

REPORT

4. Attachment 5.1 describes each action item, its status, and a comment on its progress.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS - Southern GWR forum

Action progress: Complete

Action	Source	Due date	Completed date	Accountable officer	Status comment	
35480	Provide the link to the 2025 Corporate Plan to members when the draft minutes of the August 2024 SGRF meeting are distributed	SGRF meeting 54 - 2 August 2024, Agenda Item 9 - General Business	16/08/24	13/08/24	Hayley Taylor	Link to Corporate Plan sent to members on 13 August 2024, with the draft minutes from the August 2024 SGRF meeting.

Action progress: Overdue

Action	Source	Due date	Completed date	Accountable officer	Status comment
25330	Advise the SGRF of the date of the Strategic Futures Forum as soon as it is known.	SGRF meeting 51- 1 December 2023, Agenda Item 11 - Meeting evaluation	29/03/24	Hayley Taylor	Due date extended as date has not been confirmed. Action to remain open until date is confirmed, and SGRF notified.
35481	Follow-up status of outstanding licences from the Mitchell River Winterfill Auction.	SGRF meeting 54 - 2 August 2024, Agenda Item 9 - General Business	16/08/24	Penny Winbanks	SRW have continued to follow up the status with the WGCMA as we have not yet received the required information from them. As we understand it they are waiting on information from customers. SRW are investigating where the breakdown in process has occurred and continuing to engage WGCMA to keep the process moving. As per the conditions of buying at auction, in order to issue the s67 licence to operate works the CMA needs to be satisfied with IDP provided by the water user

Item No: **6.1**

Subject: **Roundtable discussion**

The Committee Chair will lead a roundtable discussion of all committee members on:

- Regional highlights, issues and opportunities in each members area, and
- What should SRW be mindful of leading into summer?

Discussion starters:

Regional Highlights, Issues, and Opportunities

- What is happening in your area that is important to customers and the wider community?
- What are the most pressing issues currently facing your area?
- Are there any emerging opportunities that SRW should be aware of?
- How have recent developments (e.g., economic, social, environmental) impacted your region?

Preparing for Summer

- What specific challenges does your region face during the summer months?
 - How can SRW better prepare for potential summer-related issues?
 - Are there any new initiatives or programs SRW should consider implementing this summer?
-

Item No: **6.2**

Subject: **Strategic Focus Areas and Groundwater and Rivers update**

Action: **For noting**

Author: **Penny Winbanks, Manager Statutory Functions**

Date: **7/11/2024**

Focus area	Commentary
<p>Strategic focus 1. Continued advocacy for sustainable access to water for irrigators via the implementation of GM2030, policy reforms in surface water management and key stakeholder groups.</p>	<p>DEECA will continue to be invited to SGRF meetings to discuss GM2030.</p> <p>SRW continue to actively participate to discussions around apportionment of allocation from the 3-4 bench, as well as other forums around licensing and metering guidelines and access to unallocated water.</p> <p>More recently we having been driving discussions around policy matters that impede trading, and drought resilience</p>
<p>Strategic focus 2. Continue to encourage a flexible trading market through improved internal procedures and Government policies.</p>	<p>SRW have identified a preferred trade platform option and are in the final phases of development before launching.</p> <p>A more detailed update will be provided at this meeting.</p> <p>In addition we continue to advocate for enhanced flexibility within licensing guidelines and policies via GM2030 and other forums as noted above</p>
<p>Strategic focus 3. Provide more real time information for customers on water usage following the integration of meter reading data with mySRW portal to improve decision making</p>	<p>SRW are currently recruiting for a metering and data lead position to drive stronger initiatives around metering including providing customers better information about how we use and store their usage data and exploring options to ensure better access for customers to their water usage data.</p> <p>Already underway is a multi-criteria assessment of automated meter reading devices to ensure we have reliable and fit for purpose assets.</p> <p>Our commitment to e-billing systems continues, and in the recent annual customer invoices information on how to register for e-billing was included. This is the first step to ensuring customers can receive invoices and pay electronically.</p>
<p>Strategic focus 4. Undertake more detailed water resource assessment across our systems through investment of unregulated water sales funds and the continuation of the Supply/Demand projects.</p>	<p>We have initiated work to consolidate our understanding of how climate change may impact the reliability of water systems.</p> <p>This combined with findings from DEECAs Sustainable Yield project will help us identify critical focus points for investment.</p>

<p>Strategic focus 5.</p> <p>Understanding the implications of rapidly evolving cultural water policy on customer aspirations for improved access to water.</p>	<p>In recent months, SRW have made great steps in navigating the practicalities of returning water to Traditional Owners in the absence of policy.</p> <p>We are currently focussing on an application from Bunurong, having met with their staff in October to provide all the relevant information they may require to make decisions on the nature of their application.</p> <p>A meeting with GLaWAC is also scheduled to understand their priorities.</p>
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Issue	Commentary
<p>South West Limestone - Barriers to trade project</p>	<p>This project has been completed and SRW are working on implementing the actions endorsed by the Executive, including the development of a trade platform noted under Strategic focus 2.</p> <p>The project will be discussed further during agenda item 6.4.</p>
<p>Compliance and enforcement</p>	<p>SRW has made a successful prosecution against Neo Consulting. SRW alleged that Neo Consulting did not have works licences for two bores drilled in February of this year (Charge 1) and SRW records indicated that no one at Neo Consulting had a drilling licence in Australia (Charge 2).</p> <p>Following a hearing in the Melbourne Magistrates Court the court was satisfied that the elements of section 75A(3) were made out beyond reasonable doubt and accordingly found the Accused guilty. The court considered that general deterrence was an important sentencing consideration in this type of offending and made orders for the Accused to pay a fine of \$10,000.00 and SRW's costs.</p> <p>A case study on this matter will be presented during agenda item 6.2.</p>
<p>3-4 bench apportionment update</p>	<p>SRW have been engaged with DEECA and other key stakeholders as we work through Action 4-7 of the Central and Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy which seeks to allocate 16GL to irrigators, the environment and Traditional Owners.</p> <p>SRW are taking steps to understand how we can operationalise any water provided to us through the above process once a determination has been made. An update on the progress of this work will be provided at this meeting.</p>
<p>Moorabool Catchment Investigation</p>	<p>Of the 223 dams identified as potentially breaching the Water Act 1989, we have determined that 195 are compliant.</p> <p>We have issued two (2) Section 80 Ministerial Directions, eight (8) Section 78 Ministerial Directions and one (1) Section 151 Notice of Contravention.</p>

Issue	Commentary
	<p>Following the issue of directions and notices, to date, three dams were escalated through VCAT. As a result of VCAT outcomes or investigations four of these are now the subject of an application under Section 67 to modify the dam to achieve compliance.</p> <p>Investigations are ongoing in relation to the remaining dams.</p>
Maribyrnong Catchment Investigation	<p>SRW have recently received further information from members of the community that relate to dams within the Maribyrnong catchment that are potentially in breach of The Water Act 1989.</p> <p>The investigation has commenced with preliminary enquiries being conducted in relation to formatting of data and identification of locations and owners of potentially non-compliant dams.</p>
Small dams investigation	<p>Within the Central and Gippsland Region Sustainable Water strategy there is an action to undertake an assessment of the impact of small catchment dams in peri urban environment.</p> <p>SRW has engaged consultants to undertake this work.</p> <p>We will provide an update on the progress of this work at this meeting</p>
Water for Traditional Owners	<p>SRW has developed a draft application form specifically for Traditional Owner Corporations seeking licence for in-situ or non-consumptive use which has been well received to date. Our hope is that this simplifies the process as much as possible.</p> <p>As noted above we continue to focus on applications from Bunurong and GLaWAC and are currently working through what we anticipate is the final steps before we can move through the process which could see SRW calling for EOIs for additional water in some catchments.</p> <p>SRW will begin recruitment shortly for a Cultural Liaison Officer (DEECA funded) to support our work in this space.</p>
Mitchell River Management Review	<p>No further update from the August meeting. SRW are determining the pathway forward following the initial work.</p>
Complex licensing determination processes and cost recovery frameworks	<p>Work has been completed with regard to establishing a risk-based approach to assessing complex licence applications (such as the Latrobe Valley Mine Renewals and Alcoa). We have used the framework to determine the process for the Alcoa licence renewal application. This will help us provide as much certainty as possible around the process, timing and costs for these applicants.</p> <p>This work also includes the basis for SRW to more effectively recover costs associate with the provision of specialist services and advice that we provide to individuals</p>

Issue	Commentary
	and businesses prior to an application being made. This may extend to requests from customers for site visits depending on resource intensity (time, expertise etc)
SRW Groundwater & Rivers structure change	<p>Over the past two months the Groundwater & Rivers group at SRW which includes Statutory Functions and Operations & Compliance has been moving through a change process.</p> <p>Some of the key outcomes of this process are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A re-alignment of the Operations & Compliance leadership to include two new Team Leader positions and two dedicated Investigator roles to replace three supervisors. • Re-alignment of our customer service team alongside our licensing assessment team to improve our service offering • A new role in Statutory Functions for a Metering & Data lead to uplift our metering program and improve automated meter reading activities
Dry conditions in the Southwest	<p>Recognising the impact the current conditions in the southwest of Victoria are having on our customers, and may continue to have we have instigated some actions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • undertaking a review of the information and forms on our website to ensure customer can find information they need and use our forms more easily, • review and confirmation of locations and status of Emergency Water Supply Points, and • strategic drought resilience planning
Climate outlook	<p>The climate outlook from the Bureau of Meteorology on 7 November indicates the long-range forecast for December to February shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rainfall is likely (60 to 80% chance) to be above average for much of eastern Australia, including Victoria • There is an increased chance of unusually high rainfall for parts of eastern Victoria • Above average maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to very likely (60% to greater than 80% chance) across most of Australia.

Item No: **6.2**

Subject: **Compliance uplift update**

Mr Simon Wilkinson, General Manager Service Delivery, SRW, will provide the committee with an update on SRW's compliance uplift including:

- catchment based investigations update
 - new Groundwater and Rivers team structure, and how it supports SRW's regulatory responsibilities
 - Prosecution Case Study: Neo Consulting
-

Item No: **6.3**

Subject: **Small Farm Dams – project update**

Mr Matthew Hudson, Principal Hydrogeologist, SRW, will provide the committee with an update on the Small Farm Dam's project.

Item No: **6.4**

Subject: **Trade Platform – project update**

Mr Clinton Hartley, Strategy and Business Planner, SRW, will provide the committee with an update on the further development of SRW's Water Trade Platform including how the project is addressing findings from the South-west Limestone Barriers to Trade Project.

Item No: **6.5**

Subject: **Distribution options for water from 3/4 Bench**

Mr Terry Flynn, Manager Water Resources Strategy, SRW, will provide the committee with an overview of SRW's work to assess product options to distribute any volume of water SRW receive from the 3/4 Bench.

Item No: 7.1
Subject: **Communications and Engagement report – November 2024**
Action: **For noting**
Author: **Kris Perkovic, Senior Community Engagement Adviser**
Date: **6/11/2024**

PURPOSE

To update the Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum on recent communications and engagement activities.

RECOMMENDATION: The Committee note the report.

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE CONSIDERATIONS

2. Communications and engagement activity is reported at each meeting.

BACKGROUND

3. The Communications and Engagement team develops communications plans, issues media releases, manages the website and social media, customer and community engagement activities and looks after media enquiries.

REPORT

4. Quarterly newsletter

Southern Rural Water will issue its summer customer newsletter in early December 2024 that will feature a groundwater related feature. It will be distributed to all customers with a valid email address.

5. Website

A selection of stories published on our website focused on groundwater and rivers.

We are currently seeking expressions of interest for a stakeholder reference group to support a study we are leading to explore how water extraction impacts cultural, environmental, and economic values in the Moorabool and upper Maribyrnong catchments and how to improve water management in the area.

www.srw.com.au/news-media/expressions-interest-sought-moorabool-maribyrnong-stakeholder-reference-group

We have also published stories on growers doing great things with groundwater and surface water and what we're doing to support access to groundwater.

www.srw.com.au/news-media/meet-boronia-grower-blazing-trail-thorpdale

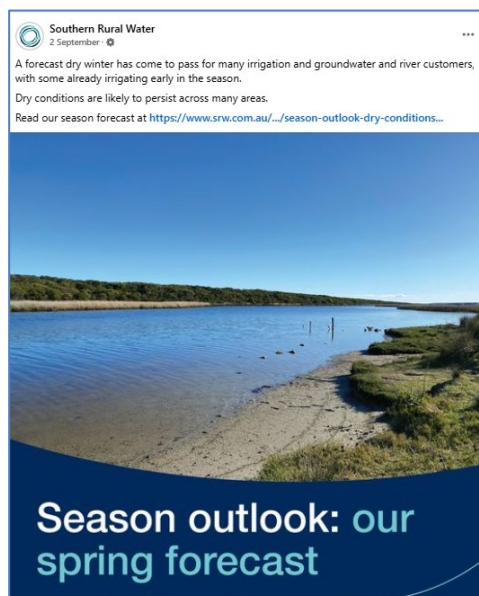
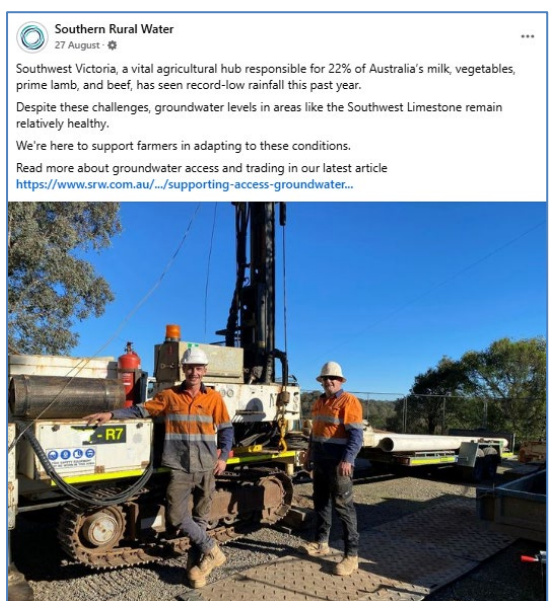
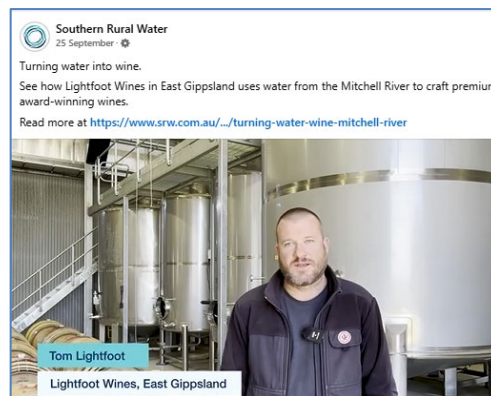
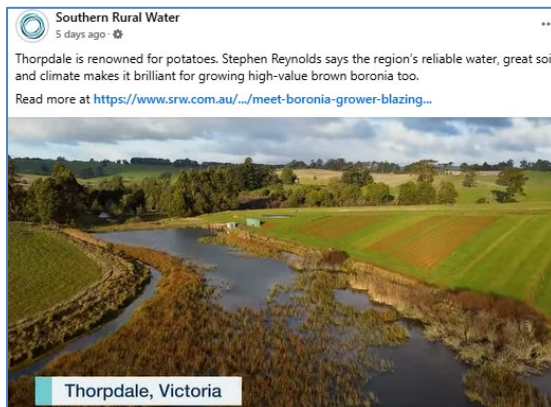
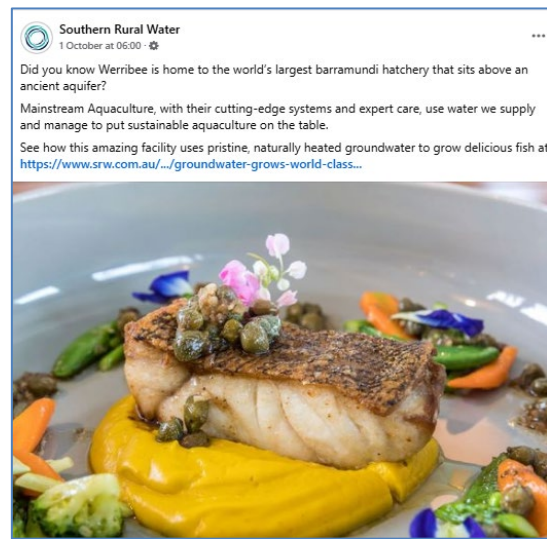
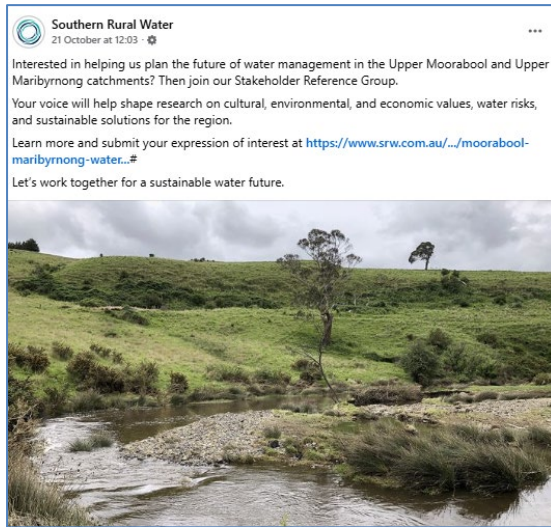
www.srw.com.au/news-media/groundwater-grows-world-class-barramundi-werribee

www.srw.com.au/news-media/season-outlook-dry-conditions-likely-persist-southwest

www.srw.com.au/news-media/supporting-access-groundwater-southwest-victoria

6. Social media

Our social media posts about groundwater and rivers customers have received good responses. Below are examples of content since the last meeting. Please follow our social media pages to see more.



Item No: **8.1**

Subject: **Important issues from other customer committees**

Cameron FitzGerald, Managing Director, will provide a verbal update on important issues raised at other customer committees.

Item No: **8.2**

Subject: **Matters referred to the board/board committee.**

Cameron FitzGerald, Managing Director, will discuss matters that will be referred to the Board.

Item No: **8.3**

Subject: **2025 Committee workplan**

Southern Rural Water will provide updates to the committee as indicated in the 2025 Committee workplan. Additional items can be added to the agenda at the request of committee members and by SRW to address any current issues or events.

During meetings, the committee can request that items are added to the workplan to ensure that updates on specific topics are provided at key intervals.

The workplan will be included as an agenda item for each meeting.

A copy of the 2025 Committee workplan is included as attachment 8.3.1 for **noting**.

SOUTHERN GROUNDWATER AND RIVERS FORUM ROLLING WORK PLAN

	Requirement	2025				2026				Notes
		FEB	MAY	AUG	NOV	FEB	MAY	AUG	NOV	
Principal & Business Matters	Communications report	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	GWR Strategic Focus Areas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Report on progress each meeting as part of the Manager GWR update. Update Focus Area's each May.
	Plan for new Financial Year			✓				✓		Plan to address Key Focus Areas
	Groundwater and Rivers Update	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Brief paragraph to update to committee on current projects and issues
Policy and strategic direction	Committee appointments			✓				✓		As required. (Chair and Deputy Chair vote)
	Compliance and Enforcement			✓				✓		EOFY performance
	Climate Outlook and Drought Response Update				✓				✓	
	Corporate Plan	✓		✓		✓		✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> February – Discussion – what does the SGRF want to see in the Corporate Plan. Align with GWR Strategic Focus Areas August – Corporate Plan (new plan for noting)
Project updates (DEECA and SRW)	SWS 4.13 – Small Farm Dams									At key project milestones
	GM2030									At key project milestones
Admin / Other	Meeting evaluation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Important issues from other customer committees	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	MD to provide verbal update
	Matters referred to the committee by the board/board committee	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Committee Workplan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Meeting schedule for the year				✓				✓	

Item No: **8.4**

Subject: **2025 meeting schedule**

Southern Rural Water propose that the SGRF continue to meet quarterly in February, May, August and November, to align with key periods within the year. The proposed schedule is provided below for discussion.

For meetings held online, it is proposed that the meetings will be held on the first Friday of the relevant month.

For the face to face meeting scheduled in November, it is proposed that the meeting is held on the Friday after the Spring Racing Carnival.

Date	Time	Location/Online
Friday 7 February 2025	9.00am – 12.00pm	Online
Friday 2 May 2025	9.00am – 12.00pm	Online
Friday 1 August 2025	9.00am – 12.00pm	Online
Friday 14 November 2025	9.30am – 1.00pm	Face to face - Melbourne

Next Steps:

SRW to finalise the proposed schedule in light of the discussion.

Item No: **9**

Subject: **General Business**

The Chair will introduce any items of general business.

- Water usage and trading in the Orbost Region – report commissioned by the Orbost Chamber of Commerce – Matt Zagami
-

Item No: **10**

Subject: **Meeting evaluation**

The Chair will seek feedback on the effectiveness of this meeting.

The Chair will ask the forum to assess the performance of the committee at this meeting, using the below questions as a guide.

1. Do we think the committee is adding value?
 2. What's working?
 3. What's not working?
-

Item No: **11**

Subject: **Next Meeting**

Pending agreement from the committee as to the 2025 meeting scheduled, the next meeting of the Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum is to be held on Friday 7 February 2025, via MS Teams.

Item No: **12**

Subject: **Close**

The Chair will close the meeting.

A networking lunch will be served at the conclusion of the meeting.