

**Date:** 01 February 2023

**Time:** 9:00AM – 10:00AM

**Location:** Burdekin Theatre

### Attendees:

**Customer Advisory Committee Members:** Russel Searle, Steven Pilla, Evan Shannon, Greg Watson, Peter Hall, Rob Stockham, Dean Sgroi, Mario Barbagello, Lyn McLaughlin (Mayor, Burdekin Shire Council), Russ McNee, Arwen Rickert, Ian Davies (online), Sharon McIntosh (online), Sarah Lingard (DRDMW) (online),

**Sunwater representatives:** William Weaver (General Manager North), David Hayes (Operations Manager North), Brock Gorey (Operations Coordinator North), Fiona Salter (Project Manager), Emily Caleo (Customer Engagement Team Lead), Kylie Thompson (Commercial Customers Manager), Alice Cuffe (Senior Stakeholder Relations Advisor), Simon Thomas (Project Director), Sarah McComber (Study Manager), Keelie O’Sullivan (Stakeholder Relations Advisor), Matthew Pearce (Regulatory & Pricing Lead)

**Guests:** Terry Granshaw, John Pierotti, Cy Kovo, Steve Attard, Melissa Balter, Narelle Breadsell, Sam Forzisi (online)

### Apologies:

Sib Rapisarda, Rob Milla, Ricky Mio, Jayson Dowie, Panikos Spyrou, Dave Paine, Travis Richards

### Minutes:

Agenda items		
Item no.	item	Presenter
1	Meeting Open	William Weaver
2	Rising Groundwater & Sugar Research Australia	Fiona Salter & Terry Granshaw
3	Burdekin Falls Dam Raising	Simon Thomas & Alice Cuffe
4	Security	Kylie Thompson
5	Burdekin Haughton WSS Modernisation Detailed Business Case	Sarah McComber & Keelie O’Sullivan
6	General Business	William Weaver & Matthew Pearce
7	Meeting Close	All

## 1. Meeting Open

- Apologies to be listed in the meeting minutes
- Overview of agenda
- Minutes from the previous meeting confirmed
  - The CAC queried if meeting minutes are objectionable. It was advised that the minutes don't capture the frustrations that are voiced in the meeting. It was requested that these are captured in the meeting minutes.
- The CAC requested for a live stream of the room to be available to those on Microsoft teams.
- The CAC would like Sunwater to ensure that meeting minutes are reviewed by the executive team.

## 2. Rising Groundwater

- Contractors engaged and on-site work proposed to commence overflow monitoring next week pending weather.
- Works continuing on providing Targeted Works proposal to ELT for approval for Stage I of project.
- Discussions occurring internally between Sunwater and the State indicating positive steps towards receiving an additional \$12.5mil Federal Funding.

### 2.1. Questions and Feedback

- The CAC requested confirmation that overflow monitoring would occur across the whole scheme, including Cassidy.
  - Sunwater confirmed the above and advised that data will be captured across the board, not just at the end of the channels.
- The CAC queried where the bores will be and what the expected outcomes will be. The CAC further advised of their frustration, referencing a 2003 pamphlet regarding combating the rising groundwater and noting that no solutions have been found yet.
  - Sunwater confirm that the main bore-field is in the Mulgrave area based off discussions with the State and a previous submission put forward to government for work in 2019. Sunwater will continue to engage experts in groundwater to come together and workshop solutions, during which time alternative solutions may be identified, other than just the bore field.
- Sunwater confirmed that until there is a code of practice (COP) dealing with extracted bore water, extraction works cannot start. It's estimated that the COP will take approximately 12 months to develop and implement. The COP ensures safe disposal of extracted groundwater minimising impacts to the surrounding environment.
- Sunwater confirmed that they will target their own infrastructure/assets to obtain better outcomes for the project. Sunwater further advised that on-farm practices can also assist in the improvement of the rising groundwater issues.
  - Sunwater confirmed that they will not be considering or regulating on-farm practices.
- The CAC further voiced their concerns about the timing for the COP to be prepared, noting that these things tend to get pushed out and that there is a belief that nothing will be seen for 18mths – 2 yrs.
- Some CAC members voiced that they don't believe Sunwater are going to do anything. Concerns were directed at council to do more.
- Some CAC requested it be on record that they are very frustrated at the timing of the project and don't believe Sunwater will be doing anything about it.

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- GBA representatives commented that they are currently paying 70% of the water bill (fixed costs), as a result there is no incentive to use groundwater water and implement better farm practices.
- CAC members queried what will be done differently during this project to ensure that something happens.
  - Sunwater representatives confirmed that the issues faced by irrigators in the region are understood. It was advised that there seems to be a collective view from those involved to progress on solutions. Ultimately, Sunwater needs support from DRDMW to find suitable solutions, along with input and representation from anyone in the group who feel they can have influence.
- Council representation expressed their frustration at the delay in implementing solutions, even as non-irrigators. People on the ground (local members) have an understanding and view of how important this project is to the region.
- The CAC confirmed that DRDMW advised they would monitor the rising groundwater in 1989, when they committed to monitoring the bores, the “avoid Murray darling basin x2”.
- Sunwater advised that at last meeting, it was confirmed that they would put together results from Gladys Lagoon for an independent consultant to look at. This was being pushed during the project managers leave and is now a priority.
- Sunwater confirmed that the work to decide where the bores will go (and to consider other solutions), as well as other project activities, will continue to push forward while the COP is being formed.
- The CAC queried if the channel system being considered in the project too.
  - Sunwater confirmed that the channels will be targeted during the project in relation to reduction of overflows, lining and potentially converting to pipelines.
- The CAC advised that technology is making some big advances globally and this should continue to be considered during the life of the project.

## 2.2. Guest presenter

- Introduction to Sugar Research Australia (SRA) representatives.
- SRA presented from [slide deck](#)
- Sunwater to take questions and redirect ([BurdekinCAC@sunwater.com.au](mailto:BurdekinCAC@sunwater.com.au))

## 3. Burdekin Falls Dam Raising

### 3.1. Project Update

Sunwater presented from [slide pack](#)

- In December 2022, the Queensland Government announced its support for Sunwater to progress an environmental impact statement based on a proposed two-metre raising of Burdekin Falls Dam, following initial consideration of Sunwater’s detailed business case.
- The next stage of planning including progressing design, collecting more detailed geotechnical information, procurement planning and consulting with key stakeholders and the community to progress the EIS.
- Sunwater confirmed the outstanding concerns regarding the project (included in slide) and advised that these will be addressed as the project progresses.

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### 3.2. Questions and feedback

- The CAC asked for confirmation of what the project is costing, including studies, monitoring, designs.
  - Sunwater confirmed that they submitted 3 options to government - a Dam Improvement Project (DIP), a dam raising and a DIP following by a future raising (note: costs are estimations). Government instructed to prepare an EIS for 2 meters.
  - Upon completion of the EIS, if approved, the Queensland Government will consider an investment decision on progressing the project.
  - The EIS is complex and may present impacts and/or conditions that materially change the DBC which will need to be considered by Government.
- Sunwater to advise the CAC on a breakdown of expenditure
- Sunwater has current approved budget of \$69.4m for the Burdekin Falls Dam projects. This budget includes \$29.5 million set aside to continue planning and assessment works in 2022-23.  
**Post meeting note:** The budget includes the field studies, progressing the design and planning for early works, the environmental impact statement (EIS) process, procurement of long-lead items, geotechnical investigations, cultural heritage surveys, project management costs and resourcing. Further details are outlined in Queensland Government State Budget papers: [https://budget.qld.gov.au/files/Budget\\_2022-23\\_Capital\\_Statement.pdf](https://budget.qld.gov.au/files/Budget_2022-23_Capital_Statement.pdf) Assessments to date support the mandatory safety improvement works. Although Burdekin Falls Dam continues to operate as it should, improvement works must be undertaken to bring the dam in line with modern engineering design and safety standards. The proposed dam raising provides an opportunity to increase water supply and deliver the required safety upgrades to improve the dam's resilience to pass significant floods in the future.
- Sunwater confirmed an extra 150,000ml of medium priority equivalent allocations will be available due to the 2m raise. Physically, more 550,000 megalitres more water will be stored.
- The CAC queried asking for further details about the customer demand.
  - Sunwater advised that demand studies were completed and included in the detailed business case (DBC). Further detail on the future water demand will be made available in the EIS. Upon completion of the EIS (if approved), the DBC will be revisited and, following a Queensland Government investment decision for the project, it is expected that the DBC will be publicly released.

## 4. Security

### 4.1. Customer security requirements

Sunwater presented from [slide pack](#)

### 4.2. Questions and feedback

- The CAC would like to understand how much "bad debt" Sunwater holds, due to customers in the Burdekin Haughton WSS.
  - Sunwater to confirm what information is not commercial-in-confidence before sharing.
- The CAC advised that they don't believe Sunwater carries significant risk, noting that fixed charges are paid in advance and can sell a customer water allocation. The CAC would like a report on how many customers have defaulted.
  - Sunwater advised that the volume of debt vs. bad payment history has increased over the last few years.
- The time frame varies on when Sunwater would attempt to use their powers to sell Water allocation, however it would be up to, or more than, 2 years until allocation would action.

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- Sunwater is not the only institution which has the power of sale over a customer's water allocation, Mortgagee would normally have a lean on the Water allocation as well.
- The CAC noted that there is an awareness that an increase in bad debt to Sunwater could ultimately impact other customers.
- Council advised that they have the ability, with regard to rates, to sell up property and recoup funds. Not having to pay security allows customers to use this money in the scheme and drive local economy.
- The CAC advised that they feel there are enough incentives to ensure customer pay their bills, eg carryover, won't be granted. There is a general feeling of unfairness due to Sunwater holding a monopoly over the service provided,
- The CAC suggested a separate security procedure for Burdekin might be appropriate,

## 5. Burdekin Haughton Water Supply Scheme Modernisation Detailed Business Case

### 5.1. Burdekin Haughton WSS Modernisation DBC

Sunwater presented from [slide pack](#)

- High level brief of the types of initiatives (automation of channels, conversion of channels to pipelines, upgrade of ageing tech) being analysed as part of the Detailed Business Case (DBC).
- Recap of the project's objectives.
- Overview of project activities being undertaken or finalised (eg. engineering, environmental assessment, sustainability assessment, economic assessment, multi criteria assessment etc)
- Callout to committee members to express their interest in participating in the Social Impact Evaluation (SIE) consultation, to inform the DBC. Project team to reach out and book meetings.
- Sunwater advised that members of the project team would be in Ayr/Clare on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> February, to meet with a cross section of stakeholders from the scheme.

### 5.2. Questions and feedback

- The CAC advised that there is synergies between the work done by SRA and the project.
- The CAC queried if the project will it become as specific as to how individual offtakes are controlled, using Coleambally as an example, which matches orders with the usage, and you get what you ordered.
  - Sunwater confirmed that this is not where the project is headed.

## 6. General Business

- Sunwater confirmed that the Water Trading Board updates ([Slide 32](#)) have been actioned, as per feedback from CACs across the state.
- CAC advised that Sunwater should look at drains depth versus the design depth, as this has changed due to sedimentation, resulting in it not draining as well. Operations will confirm the drain in question and take a look into the drain depths and general maintenance.
- Sunwater Regulatory and Pricing Lead provided a QCA irrigation pricing review update:
  - Sunwater have been working with DRDMW and Treasury since late last year and awaiting the signing and publication of a formal referral to signal the timing and scope of the next QCA review of irrigation prices. The referral is awaiting Ministerial signature and is expected in the next month or so.

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- Sunwater is working to the timing presented in the draft referral with a pricing proposal submission date of 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023. QCAs Draft Report is due 30 June 2024, with their Final Report due 31 January 2025. The Minister is expected to issue his/her final decision prior to 31 May 2025, with new prices to come into effect from 1 July 2025.
- The DIP program capital has been excised from the referral and will continue to be funded outside irrigation prices.
- Council advised that there is still a group advocating for Hells Gate.
- The CAC asked if considerations were being made by government to financially compensate farmers for the issues encountered due to the rising groundwater issues.
  - This is a consideration for government, not Sunwater.
- Next meeting date confirmed: Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> April.

## 7. Meeting close

## 8. Approval and Review

<b>Chair:</b>	William Weaver
<b>Minutes:</b>	Emily Caleo
<b>Date:</b>	Wednesday 1 <sup>st</sup> February 2023

## 9. Action items table

Agenda item	Action	Responsible person/s
1.	Check for live stream video capabilities of the in-room meeting attendance	Sunwater Customer Engagement
3.2	Sunwater to confirm what is not commercial-in-confidence before sharing “bad debt” information with the CAC.	Sunwater Credit Team
3.2	Sunwater to advise the CAC on a breakdown of expenditure	Sunwater Project Team (BFD raising)
6.	Operations will confirm the drain in question and take a look into the drain depths and general maintenance.	Sunwater Operations Burdekin Haughton

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