

Date: Tuesday 6th December 2022

Time: 9:00AM – 11:00AM

Location: Music Loft – Burdekin Theatre

Attendees:

Customer Advisory Committee members: Sharon McIntosh, Mario Barbagello, Ian Davies, Russel Searle, Russ McNee, Robert Stockham, C Kovacich, Peter Hall, Rob Milla, Greg Watson, Lisa Parker

Sunwater representatives: David Hayes (Operations Manager North), Emily Caleo (Customer Engagement Team Lead), Fiona Salter (Project Manager), Marian Hart (GM Water resources), Bianca Barrie (Senior Water Accounting Advisor)

Guests: Scott Stevens (DRDMW)

Apologies:

Steven Pilla, William Weaver (GM North), Lyn McLaughlin (BSC Mayor), Sarah Lingard (DRDMW)

Minutes:

Agenda items		
Item no.	item	Presenter
1	Meeting Open	David Hayes
2	Carryover	Marian Hart
3	Lower Burdekin Groundwater Mitigation	Fiona Salter
4	Action Items Table	David Hayes/Bianca Barrie
5	General Business	All
6	Meeting Close	David Hayes

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1. Meeting Open

- Overview of agenda.
- Apologies.
- Minutes from the previous meeting confirmed.

2. Carryover

2.1. Carryover in the Burdekin Haughton WSS and factsheet

- Sunwater delivered response as per [Action Items table](#), agenda item 3.0 “Advise of the Benefits and risks to changing the carryover rules, to not cancel when BFD spills.”

3. Lower Burdekin Groundwater Mitigation

3.1. Lower Burdekin Groundwater Mitigation Project Update

Sunwater presented from [slide pack](#).

3.2. Questions and Feedback

- The CAC noted that when DRDMW issued groundwater harvesting licenses, which allowed customers to take water from above pre-development levels. However, these were only issued for bores on the southside of the Bruce Highway. All other area’s are still required to submit an application to be granted a permit to increase the volume of groundwater pumped.
- The CAC queried what the rules are regarding bore monitoring and that all bores in the scheme should be managed and monitored the same.
 - Sunwater advised that they monitor bores in the GBA for salinity, water depth, usage, etc. and the data collected is fed back to DRDMW.
- The CAC requested a map, identifying where monitored bores are located.
- The CAC asked for information on how Sunwater will spend the future funding that will be granted.
 - Sunwater advised that this will be spent on phase two of the project, with a focus on a groundwater extraction bore field in the Mulgrave area.
- Sunwater confirmed that an advisory group was stood up to discuss the project, in 2019.
- Sunwater advised that they are confident that the “Code of Practice” for groundwater export will allow for progress to be made on the Phase 2 groundwater extraction project. Previously, there were roadblocks due to environmental considerations. The detrimental impacts of not moving forward, for the irrigation land and environment, is significant.
 - The Code of Practice will also call for better sharing of water and environment data.
- The CAC queried where the ongoing costs will be allocated and who will be responsible for the maintenance and running of the assets installed.
 - Sunwater advised that assets will be owned by Sunwater and the costs will be absorbed across the pricing for the Water Supply Scheme.
 - CAC queried the possibility for applying to government for a grant to maintain the assets.
- The CAC queried why Sunwater aren’t working on channel maintenance and lining.
 - Sunwater advised that Roger Shore and Dave Allen reports both advise of some infrastructure seepage, but that the focus should be on removing the groundwater faster than it is coming in.

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- Lining every channel in the WSS would come at significant cost, both financial and time spent. There is more benefit on expenditures going towards groundwater extraction solutions.
- The CAC asked if there is funding available for the GBA to begin working on dewatering solutions.
 - Sunwater advised that the current project will focus on the Mulgrave area. If it is successful, these learnings can be utilized in other areas of the WSS. Modelling has indicated Mulgrave area is at the most risk of detrimental impacts from rising groundwater.
- Sunwater advised that they will utilise new bores to accomplish the desired outcomes of the project and will consider existing bores where appropriate. The aim will be to reduce the groundwater to a minimum of 3m below surface and maintain this buffer through efficient on-farm irrigation practices and targeted seepage mitigation works where appropriate.
 - CAC requested map area of extraction bores.
- The CAC noted there have been bores in the Mulgrave area for many years, which aren't extracting any water.
 - Sunwater confirmed that other parts of the scheme can be considered if extraction from the Mulgrave area proves too difficult.
 - Sunwater is also concerned about the DIN levels when considering other locations. The groundwater extracted needs to have a suitable treatment system to remove DIN prior to entering the natural waterways. Mulgrave is typically lower in DIN due to the heavy clay soils and reduced seepage of nutrients.
- The CAC advised that there were six private bores available for Sunwater to access for the project.
- Sunwater advised on the timeline; ELT presentation in 2023 for Phase 1. Once agreed there will be a quick design phase, an expected 18 months to two years for infrastructure related to targeted seepage mitigation works to be constructed and commissioned.
- Discussions confirmed that when the scheme was first built, there was a 1ML irrigation limit per hectare for groundwater extraction. These limits were adhered to and added to the impacts of the rising groundwater due to the majority of water use being surface water.
 - Sunwater proposed that any future schemes would be set up with a high standard of monitoring and meter requirements for closer management of water usage.
- The CAC queried if Gladys was still a viable option.
 - Sunwater advised that this location will be followed up with the science panel and is still in the budget for consideration.
- Sunwater confirmed that primarily, DIN and salinity levels are rising. However, in some areas, this varies, possibly due to improved on-farm practices in respect to DIN reduction.
- The CAC requested to view data for a specific bore site RN11910898, which noted a peak (assumed due to Haughton Main Channel construction in the 1980s).
 - Sunwater advised that there are many possible correlations that can be assumed to impact this, eg., vegetation clearing, climate impacts, wet seasons, etc. There may be no definitive way to confirm why this peak was recorded.
- Sunwater advised that there is a 3000ML extraction target for the Mulgrave area.
- The CAC queried why the water extracted will be pumped into drains, but not channels.
 - Sunwater advised that conjunctive use water in the channel's risks soil degradation both to Sunwater infrastructure and on-farm. Operating with this as an option would require significant risk management and will not be considered as a solution.
- The CAC were concerned that the Townsville pipeline would be an added pressure to the water supply scheme and could impact on the rising groundwater issue.

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- Sunwater confirmed that there have been many consultations with Townsville Water, during design phase, to ensure that the pipeline is built with minimal risk.
- Sunwater advised that building of the pipeline is not Sunwaters project, the asset will belong to Townsville Water.

4. Action Items Table

4.1. Action items from previous meeting

- Sunwater delivered responses as per the [Action Items table](#).

4.2. Questions and Feedback

- Sunwater to follow up with the CAC regarding customer accounts which have been allowed carryover, while being in a debt situation to Sunwater.
- Sunwater to confirm that the Burdekin Haughton Carryover forms have advice on them that carryover applications are automatic in the WSS.
- Sunwater to consider reporting on carryover in the SPPs.
- Sunwater to include cyclone channel management strategy as request during the operations manual reviews in 2023.
- Sunwater to also note in the operations manual that RH5 is a drain and boards should be removed during severe weather events.
- The CAC queried why Sunwater require security in the form of a financial holding, when there is security in Sunwater managing and being able to seize a customer's water allocation. If an individual has invested large amounts of money, why does Sunwater require further security? Can a Sunwater representative present to the CAC on the following:
 - Structural trigger points for requesting security.
 - What would be applied at what stage.
- The CAC further noted that Personal/Director guarantees still impact customers in the short term.
- The CAC would like to see the process become less impactful on customer, for the purpose of economic benefits in the scheme. The CAC would like a timeline for when this can be delivered.

5. General Business

- The CAC queried if there is funding available for the improvement of channel linings.
 - Sunwater confirmed that the channels are maintained, however, should the lining fall into the asset plan, they will be included in the scheme's annuity budget.
 - Sunwater confirm the funding breakdown.
- The CAC would like to be presented reporting on how other schemes have mitigated groundwater issues. DRDMW to assist.
- Regarding the anticipated Burdekin Falls Dam raising announcement, the CAC noted the following key concerns:
 - Impact of new allocations on existing allocations (reliability, % and pricing)
 - Where will costings be allocated/who is paying? (This is a concern for customers in the region who don't have a demand for water, but are fearful they will wear the cost of the increase)

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- Impact/reliability/availability of water harvesting
- Environmental flow impacts
- Expectancy to better understand and be consulted on the above impacts (especially cost/pricing), in preparation for the upcoming QCA IPP engagements
- The CAC requested to consider moving the meetings from Wednesday to a day closer to either end of the week.
 - Sunwater to put this to a vote.

6. Approval and Review

Chair:	David Hayes (Operations Manager North)
Minutes:	Emily Caleo (Customer Engagement Team Lead)
Date:	Tuesday, 6 th December 2022

7. Action items table:

Agenda item	Action	Responsible person/s
3.2	Extraction bore location map to be shared with the CAC.	Project Manager – Rising Groundwater
3.2	Sunwater to contact CAC members regarding access to six private bores.	Project Manager – Rising Groundwater
4.2	Sunwater to confirm that the Burdekin Haughton Carryover forms have advice on them that carryover applications are automatic in the WSS.	Customer Interactions Team
4.2	Sunwater to consider reporting on carryover in the SPPs.	Sunwater
4.2	Sunwater to include cyclone channel management strategy as request during the operation’s manual reviews in 2023.	Sunwater
4.2	Sunwater to also note in the operations manual that RH5 is a drain and boards should be removed during severe weather events.	Sunwater
4.2	Sunwater to present to the CAC on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural trigger points for requesting security. • What would be applied at what stage. • Timeline for delivery of changes to the security process 	Sunwater Credit Team
5.	Sunwater to confirm the funding breakdown for the Rising Groundwater Mitigation project.	Project Manager – Rising Groundwater
5.	Information delivered/presented to the CAC on how other schemes have mitigated groundwater issues.	Project Manager – Rising Groundwater/DRDMW
5.	Sunwater to put the meeting day and time to a committee vote.	Customer Engagement Team