



MINUTES OF MEETING – 19 March 2010

Meeting opened at 10.03am

Present:

Attendees	Representation
Joe Moro	Mareeba Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association
Charlie Martens	Regional Manager SunWater
Eva Arena	Barron River/Tinaroo Falls Dam Area (left 10.43am)
Evan McGrath	Tableland Regional Council
Cid Rantucci	Mitchell Catchment – Supplementary Scheme
Makse Srhoj	Barron River Catchment Supplemented Streams
Maryann Salvetti	Tableland CANEGROWERS Ltd
Bronwyn Dwyer	Secretary & proxy for Tableland CANEGROWERS Ltd
Colin Bendall	SunWater Area Operations Manager, Far North Queensland

1. Welcome and Apologies

Shaun Fassio and, Eddie Toffanello

2. Previous Minutes and Action List

- Minutes of the 20 November 2009 Meeting were *Moved: Maryann Salvetti, Seconded: Makse Srhoj as a true and correct record. Carried.*
Action List: Tabled.
- 20 November 2009 4.2: The Carryover Rules appear in two (2) different places on the website. The cancellation on 7 days notice clause has been removed from one place but is yet to be removed from the other. This was an oversight and will be removed
Action: Cancellation on 7 days notice clause to be removed from both places where Carryover Rules appear
- 20 November 2009 4.5: Boyle Creek Siphon in the list to be screened around this time in 2011
Action: Bronwyn to put Boyle Creek Siphon on agenda for March 2011

3. Correspondence

- Correspondence Log tabled. *The committee resolved to accept the Correspondence Log*
- MDIAC Letter to Peter Boettcher re Barrier Fencing: Tabled

4. Business Arising From Minutes:

- Justification User Pays Fees: Fee increases for over the counter transactions have been implemented across the whole state and are a result of a 'Cost Recovery Exercise which was worked out by state wide costing of the transactions.
- It is outside of the operational charter of MDIAC so the industry bodies will follow up by writing to SunWater to request justification
Action: MDFVGA & TCG Ltd to follow up on User Pays Fee Increases
- East Barron: Tabled draft letter / questionnaire to be sent to East Barron Irrigators.



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- Add into letter that irrigators will have to pay for any increase in capacity.
Action: Charlie to finalise letter and send to East Barron Irrigators
- **Fencing Styles:** There is provision for alternate styles of fencing to be erected but SunWater will only contribute the cost equivalent to the 6 foot fence that they use.
- Fencing style cost comparison: The current 6 foot fence is half the price of a 4 foot pool style fence.
- SunWater will consult with landowners before erecting fencing and will give them the option of the type of fencing and the landowner erecting the fencing themselves. If the landowner wishes to erect their own fence SunWater will pay a portion as long as the fence is on the SunWater boundary.
- Gates will be installed in consultation with the landowner, where they gain access to their property by driving over an irrigation channel.
- **Mandatory Water Ordering:** The letter sent to irrigators earlier this year has had a positive effect. The number of irrigators ordering water had increased as has the number of irrigators asking for help to learn how to use the water ordering system. SunWater will now be targeting individual irrigators at the ends of the creeks and channels who are not ordering water and will take them through the water ordering process.
- Currently water ordering is by phone only. There needs to be some kind of receipt system back to the irrigator as some irrigators have ordered water and the water officer hasn't received it.
- SunWater is currently looking into an internet water ordering system for Mareeba and Burdekin.
- The MDIAC commented that Water Officers do a very good job across the district and help out the irrigators when they can.
- Makse would like the Water Officers to talk to irrigators to get a feel for what crops are being grown so that they know the water requirements of their area.
- The issue of irrigators not knowing their water requirements 48 hours ahead to be able to place and order was raised. Charlie explained that irrigators can place a 'standing water order and vary it if their water needs change.
- There is also an issue that if you order water and don't use it SunWater have the right to make you pay for it.
- **Land Access/ Recreation Management of Tinaroo:** Channel access roads are not public roads. For safety, legal liability and maintenance access reasons SunWater will be making every effort to stop the public from accessing these roads.
- Approx. 10 to 12 Gates with locks are going to be installed along Channel access roads to stop general public from using them.



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- Land owners who require access to SunWater roads to enter their properties are able to apply for an access licence.
- The Committee asked SunWater to write to irrigators regarding the Land Access issue and the installation of gates. They also asked that SunWater let irrigators know that they can apply for access licence (for a fee) if they need legitimate access to a SunWater road to enter their properties.
- SunWater has surveyed property owners adjoining Lake Tinaroo regarding their usage of SunWater land. Things like chicken coups, swings etc will be required to be removed and pontoons will need to pass safety inspections and landowners will be required to pay a fee. Even mowing is a public liability issue – Landowners will be required to apply for a licence (for a fee) to mow.
- There is an area around the dam which has a walking track that council used to mow. Residents approached SunWater to mow it but they declined so the residents are now going to approach council. If council wants to mow it SunWater will ask Council to take over that land.
- **Timing of Shutdowns – Service Targets:** 8 day shutdown required to put new gates in a section just below the dam and channel washout to be repaired out by granite creek. Proposed time periods 19 April – 29 April or 10 May – 21 May
- The Committee made it clear that an 8 day shutdown at this time of the year was unacceptable to irrigators - especially to the cane industry.
- SunWater agreed to put subsurface drainage in at the channel washout so that the washout repairs can be carried out at another time.
- The Committee suggested SunWater investigate the contractors working 24 hour shifts to reduce the shutdown period and look at doing it in 2 x 3 day shutdowns with 7 days in between in April. SunWater advised that 3 day shutdowns are not feasible as 1 day is taken up draining the channel and 1 day is required for the curing of the works. SunWater advised that 4 but most likely 5 day shutdowns would be the minimum required.
Action: SunWater will let MDFVGA and TCG know what they propose regarding the shutdown
Action: SunWater to send letters to irrigators and put in the papers to let them know of shutdown
- May 2010 – EB3 – 2 x 5 day shutdowns with water back on over weekend in between
- **Bioobhra Channel:** For future reference the best time for shutdowns is just prior to cane harvest (early May)



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5. SunWater Manager's Report

Tabled

- Dam currently at 81%. Low this year of 58%
- Currently in high zone. If no major inflow between now and the end of the month it will be back in the medium zone for April.
- Approx 600ML/day current release: 300ML/day irrigation release and 300ML/day river release.
Action: SunWater to advise irrigators on the Barron River of releases for April
- Usage this year was higher than usual due to the late wet season.
- 20,000ML more usage this year than for the same time last year.
- For the 2nd quarter of the 2009/2010 water year 24 irrigators have been sent breach letters for taking water above their entitlement.
- Tinaroo Falls Dam Upgrade: Anchor headstocks are nearly complete and coring is about to commence.
Action: SunWater to organise bus trip to the dam wall and lunch MDIAC meeting at Pencini's

6. Other Business

- **Relevance of MDIAC:** Evan questioned the relevance of the MDIAC given that we were unaware of the restructure and Mareeba office job losses. The Mayor raised the job losses issue at the Community Cabinet and has written letters to the Minister.
- The Committee are disappointed that they still have not been officially told of the job losses in the Mareeba office. The Committee should have at least been advised before the announcement was made to media. The Committee would have been happy to sign a confidentiality agreement if that was an issue. Charlie replied that he was only made aware of the job losses the afternoon before it went to press the next morning. Colin agreed that they could have handled the issue better and will take on this on board in future.
- Colin explained that the Charter of the MDIAC is to keep representatives up to date with the operational / maintenance issues and that the Committee can't influence policy issues. The MDIAC reminded SunWater that the charter allows for sub-committees to be formed to discuss issues that are not operational.
- If MDIAC through the Chairman voiced the opinion that if SunWater is not communicating with them to the point that they do not know about issues being implemented ie. fee increases / staff losses / carryover until after they have happened they might as well not have the MDIAC and SunWater might as well just write to the industries. The Committee members will consider whether they see any worth in keeping their positions on the MDIAC.



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- Colin committed to try to make sure that SunWater provides the MDIAC with information that will potentially affect the irrigators.
- *The committee resolved to write a letter to the SunWater CEO regarding sub-committees being set up to discuss issues that are outside the charter of the MDIAC.*

Action: Write letter to SunWater CEO re discussing issues outside of the MDIAC Charter and why Sunwater had not set up other working groups to discuss these issues with the local industry organisation and irrigators. Also way the committee was not advised before changes were made for e.g. staff changes and fee increases.

- **Crocodile in the Channel:** A small saltwater crocodile was located in channel at McGraths. They contacted both EPA and SunWater. McGrath's are very upset that SunWater emptied the channel for maintenance work and the crocodile ended up in the Barron River.
- SunWater replied that they were unable to locate the crocodile in the channel.
- **New SunWater Structure:** As a result of not meeting cost efficiency targets set as part of the last price path there has been a restructure of the SunWater customer support staff where there is duplication. There will now be a centralised customer service centre in Brisbane. Nine (9) Mareeba staff has been given notice that their positions will be no longer as of June 2011 to give them time to find other employment / other jobs within SunWater etc.
- Cost savings on equipment and vehicles are also being carried out.
- Tony Greer has taken up a position in Brisbane as head of the Customer Service Centre.
- Charlie and Colin will do their best to make sure that irrigators level of service is not reduced and asked the MDIAC to let them know if the level of service is unsatisfactory.
- **Weed Control:** Chain dragging through channel worked very well and SunWater will be doing some more chain dragging later in the year.
- Copper Sulphate permit to use had been under threat. It is now expected that approval will be granted to use Copper Sulphate under the current label until 2013. Dosing trials have been carried out to vary rates to get minimum residual level while still getting an algae kill. Also carrying out dosage trials at the permanent tank just down from the Lake Tinaroo.
- Mareeba main channel screen is being modified to address weed issue and a prototype weed removal water wheel rake is being fabricated to rake weed out of the channel.
- **Barron ROP Review:** There has been no indication from DERM on the release of the Barron ROP Review.
- **SunWater Credit Card Payment:** The MDIAC requested that SunWater investigate a Credit Card Payment System for SunWater Customers.
Action: SunWater to look into credit card payment system



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- **Water Meter Accuracy:** Water Meters currently carry manufacturer and installation certification. They will have to be recertified annually once the National Metering Standards becomes enforceable in 2019.
- **Overdue Account Letter:** There has been a complaint from an irrigator that the wording is very harsh in the Overdue Account Letter. The Committee would like to see SunWater review and reword the letter.
Action: SunWater to review the wording of the Overdue Account Letter

7. Next Meeting Date and Agenda Items

Next MDIAC Meeting is scheduled for 7 May 2010 at 10.00am

Meeting Closed: 1.55pm

Minutes reviewed and accepted by:

Joe Moro
Chairperson

Charlie Martens
SunWater Manager

20.04.2010

Date

Minutes to be accepted by MDIAC at next meeting.