

Nathan Dam and Pipelines Project EIS

Community Liaison Group

Minutes of meeting



MAKING WATER WORK

Meeting number: 7

Date: Tuesday, 27 August 2013

Time: 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Attendees	<p>Vaughn Becker (Banana Shire Council) Cecily Brockhurst (Murilla Community Centre) Adam Clarke (Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland, Upper Dawson Branch) Jeanie Conachan (Fitzroy Basin Food and Fibre) Michael McCabe (Capricorn Conservation Council) Rob Hutchinson (Dawson Valley Irrigators) Sam Jerrard (Taroom Lions) Mark & Kathy Liddle (Landholders) Charisse Edwards (Dawson Catchment Coordinating Association) Warren Phelps (Taroom Lions) Sam Rathbone (Landholder) Douglas Adam (Taroom District Development Association) Bill Stephens (SunWater) Steve Murton (SKM)</p>
Apologies	<p>Nigel Parratt (Queensland Conservation Council) Stephen Hegedus (Western Downs Regional Council) Rebecca Kirby-Cummins (Office of the Coordinator-General)</p>

Agenda Item	Discussion
Welcome/ introductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bill Stephens thanked CLG members for their attendance. He introduced himself as the new Project Manager for the Nathan Dam and Pipelines Project, and Steve Murton as the SKM Project Manager for the Nathan Supplementary EIS (SEIS). CLG members then introduced themselves. • The meeting agenda was displayed and accepted as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Supplementary EIS process ○ Project update / proposed changes ○ Supplementary studies / significant updates ○ Finalisation of the Supplementary EIS ○ Questions / discussion ○ Close / lunch
Supplementary EIS process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steve Murton provided an overview of the SEIS process, the current status of the SEIS and the expected timelines for completion. • This 7th CLG meeting was confirmed as part of the SEIS process, and the outcomes will be included in a consultation report appended to the SEIS. • The SEIS is expected to be submitted to the Coordinator-General for his consideration in September (<i>Note that this has now moved to the end of October in view of the expected timeframe for SEWPac negotiations on MNES issues.</i>). The C-G's approval decision is expected late this year and the Federal Gov't decision on Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) is also expected late this year depending on whether more information is required. • Steve confirmed that the SEIS has been prepared in response to submissions (58 received), legislative changes and further design and technical studies. • The final SEIS will be made available on the Office of the Coordinator-General (OCG) and SunWater websites. • A CLG member requested that a hard copy of the SEIS be provided to the Taroom

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	<p>Library. Others requested that SunWater notify CLG members when the SEIS is available on the OCG and SunWater websites. Both requests were agreed to by Bill Stephens.</p>
<p>Project update/ Proposed changes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bill Stephens confirmed that the Project will be constructed only if approvals are obtained and sufficient customers commit to taking water. SunWater takes a 'foundation customer' approach, through which financial support for the development phase is sought from committed customers. CSG water has potential to delay Nathan, but a positive business case decision for a mine to proceed would be unlikely without a secure long-term water supply, hence Nathan Dam. SunWater aims to have approvals in place so the Project can proceed when required. • A CLG member reported that there is a lot of uncertainty regarding the amount of CSG water being produced within the region and how it may influence demand for the Nathan Project. Bill Stephens mentioned a recent report on expected CSG water production commissioned by The Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM) and how this production may influence Project timelines. CLG members requested a link to the study. <i>Link – <http://www.nrm.qld.gov.au/water/health/healthy-headwaters/feasibility-study/pdf/csg-water-forecasting-summary.pdf></i> • General discussion followed on the overall uncertainty of CSG water as a water supply, and the uncertainty surrounding re-injection of CSG water into the aquifers. It was confirmed that the Nathan EIS does not include any integration of CSG water with the dam or trunk pipeline – separate approvals would be necessary for this to occur. • No changes are proposed to the dam in the SEIS. A CLG member expressed his view that an FSL of 183.5m AHD for Nathan Dam is too high and will impact too much on wetlands and riparian vegetation. A wall at 179m AHD would significantly reduce impacts to vegetation. Bill Stephens responded that a dam of this size would not be adequate in meeting the long-term water supply needs of the region. • A number of changes to the pipeline are proposed and were discussed. The main changes are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dam to Wandoan section – Use of 69.4 km of the Woleebee pipeline (Nathan Road section) as part of the Nathan pipeline ○ Wandoan to Chinchilla section – pipe diameter increase, and minor alignment changes to avoid land parcels, vegetation and state controlled land where possible ○ Chinchilla to Dalby section – Termination prior to Warra rather than extending to Dalby, and relocation of the final 20 km of pipeline from the northern to southern side of the Leichhardt Highway to reduce impacts and provide better access for the majority of customers (mainly south of the highway). • Additional consultation with those significantly impacted by the changes is currently underway. • A CLG member asked whether Chinchilla has requested access to Nathan water. Bill Stephens undertook to check this. <i>(Note: It has been confirmed that SunWater has discussed with WDRC the potential for Nathan water supplementing Chinchilla's existing water supplies and believes that the council is interested subject to due diligence on price, timing and feasibility.)</i>
<p>Supplementary studies / significant updates since EIS completed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Strategic Cropping Land (SCL)</u> – SunWater believes that the recently introduced SCL requirements will apply to the dam wall and inundation area; however, the pipeline will be exempt (water cycle management) except where a development permit is required for vegetation clearing; and associated infrastructure will be exempt as the majority relates to construction or maintenance of roads, for which SCL does not apply. • <u>Wetlands</u> – Surveys of five additional wetlands within the inundation area have been undertaken. Offsets will be required for these should the dam proceed. • <u>Coolibah Black Box Woodlands (CBBW)</u> – Listed post-EIS – further surveys have been undertaken and additional areas identified. Revegetation of the northern

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	<p>margin of the water storage with endemic species including CBBW is proposed – will partially mitigate impact associated with inundation, and CBBW offsets are expected to be required as part of the overall offsets package. CLG members indicated that soil types associated with the northern margin of the storage area would not be suitable for CBBW. CLG members indicated that they didn't believe CBBW (and other offsets) will be appropriately met.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Koala</u> – Now listed as vulnerable – Additional field studies have been undertaken and mitigation strategies proposed (results discussed). A CLG member expressed concern that koalas are sensitive to insect attacks and will look to move away from the proposed northern offset area as there will be an increase in water-breeding insects in the shallow margin of the dam. Steve Murton confirmed that the objective for the koala will be to provide connectivity from the northern margins of the dam (with appropriate eucalypt species) through 'Spring Creek' and into the Precipice National Park where a greater number of the species are anticipated to live. The area within the water storage area was not identified as supporting an important population. • <u>Boggomoss snail</u> – Two more surveys have been undertaken since the EIS. Snail observations during the initial survey (after floods) were low. More targeted surveys were then undertaken – all potential habitat at Mt Rose was surveyed and smaller patches of habit were surveyed at downstream sites. Only 3 adult snails were found at Mt Rose despite the extensive search, while the maximum number of snails found at the downstream sites was 125 at Nardoo (adults and juveniles). A CLG member mentioned that multiple snails had recently been observed under logs on her property downstream of the dam. Another CLG member asked for a print-out of the survey results. • <u>Surface water</u> – A complete revision was required due to the new Fitzroy Basin Water Resource Plan (WRP). Modelling indicates that there will be little impact on existing high priority and medium priority water entitlements downstream of the dam, but compensation will be required for waterharvesters should the dam proceed. A compensation strategy is currently being developed in consultation with waterharvesters, which will provide a framework for compensation negotiations should the dam proceed. • <u>Groundwater</u> – Further studies have been undertaken to enable a better understanding of the relationship between aquifers and springs, refine the conceptual groundwater model and develop a future monitoring program. A CLG member suggested that the dam could have significant impact on groundwater; for example, no work has been done on the potential for blue/green algae to contaminate groundwater aquifers. A CLG member recommended that SunWater should review work completed by Dr Larelle Fabbro on this subject. CLG members expressed interest in the location of the illustrated cross-section showing a modelled groundwater pressure gradient. Steve Murton confirmed that more detail will be provided in the Groundwater chapter of the SEIS. • <u>Cultural heritage and native title</u> – Bill Stephens confirmed that cultural heritage management plans and an indigenous land use agreement for the dam and initial section of the pipeline (Wulli Wulli and Iman #2 claim areas) have been finalised and registered. Cultural heritage service agreements are in place with the Western Wakka Wakka and Barunggam people for the remainder of the pipeline route but CHMPs haven't been finalised due to pipeline route changes. These CHMPs will be finalised prior to project construction. • <u>Offsets</u> – Steve Murton explained that offset scenarios as currently detailed are provisional, and further investigation for habitat suitability will be completed should the project be approved. Bill Stephens discussed a desktop study (by Earthtrade) which suggests that sufficient suitable offsets are available in the region for the Project. A CLG member r expressed the view that offsets will take away food producing land and this is very detrimental to the region. There should be community consultation on offsets, and there are concerns about what happens to the money paid for offsets. CLG members requested that they be informed on what the offset conditions will be (when established).

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Finalisation of Supplementary EIS (SEIS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bill Stephens confirmed that most SEIS chapters have been finalised after review by OCG and agencies. The draft Groundwater chapter is yet to be completed based on the results of the recent study, and this has flow-on effects to other chapters (MNES and EMP). The MNES chapter is yet to be reviewed by SEWPaC. • The final SEIS (including appendices) is expected to be submitted in September <i>(Note that this has now been deferred to the end October in view of the likely timeframe for review of the MNES chapter)</i>
Questions / discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A CLG member noted that local council will incur a considerable loss of rates as a result of inundated land. Shopkeepers in town will lose business and council revenue will decrease. The Taroom township will lose local jobs – O&M jobs on the dam and pipeline weren't much of an exchange. The only winners are those in the Surat Basin. Bill Stephens responded that there will be short-term job creation, flow-on economic benefits and additional opportunities created by the dam, e.g. recreation. • A CLG member asked whether there would be restrictions in land use in areas above the dam. Bill Stephens believed this would be unlikely (other than in the flood margin). • There was general discussion about muddy banks generated by fluctuating water levels within the water storage which will result in stock management issues and the breeding of insects. Steve Murton confirmed that these issues are covered in the EIS and SEIS (Environmental Management Plan). There was also discussion on the likelihood that fluctuations in the dam level won't be great due to the size of the dam and the level of water security attached to the new allocations. • Concerns were raised about dewatering impacts on bores during dam construction. Steve Murton confirmed that this issue (and mitigation) is covered in the EIS and no impact is expected on the Taroom town bores. • A CLG member asked about upstream flooding impacts of the dam and whether it would have a downstream flood mitigation role. Bill Stephens reported that the difference between the 1 in 100 pre- and post-dam flood levels decreased with distance from the dam wall, and while the impact around Taroom is small, SunWater is considering whether flood easements will be required over affected land. The dam has not been designed to have a downstream flood mitigation role. • There was general discussion on fishing club concerns about CSG water entering Glebe Weir (from the Woleebee pipeline).
Meeting close	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The meeting closed at 1.00 pm. Attendees were thanked for their participation.