

Mareeba Dimbulah Irrigation Area Council

MINUTES OF MEETING – 5 December 2014

Meeting opened at 10.08am

Present:

Attendees	Representation
Joe Moro	Mareeba Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association
Bronwyn Dwyer	Secretary
Brad Maisel	Channels/Pipelines – Central Area
Shaun Fassio	NQ Co-op (arrived 10.14am)
Maryann Salvetti	Channels/Pipelines – Eastern Area
Peter Howe	Channels/Pipelines – Eastern Area
Eva Arena	Barron River/Tinaroo Falls Dam Area
Evan McGrath	
Charlie Martens	Sunwater Service Manager Mareeba
Kylie Collins	Channels/ Pipelines – Western Area
Makse Srhoj	Barron River Catchment Supplemented Streams
James Mummery	Sunwater Area Operations Manager Far North (left 12.28pm)
Colin Bendall	Sunwater Manager Service Delivery (left 12.28pm)

1. Apologies:

2. Previous Minutes & Action List:

- Minutes of the 17th October 2014 Meeting were *Moved: Eva Arena, Seconded: Maryann Salvetti as a true and correct record. Carried*

- Action List: Tabled

- Meeting with Landowner re Gate for Mud Road – Charlie held a meeting with the 4 landowners. Gate at the mill end has been closed but there is a track around it which is on SunWater and private land. SunWater will attempt to block the track on their land. There is also the possibility to move the gate up a bit further where it is closer to the channel so a track can't be made around it. There was no agreement as to where a second gate would go. Sunwater and landowners are going to try to keep an eye on movement of unauthorised vehicles.

Action: Charlie to hold another meeting of landowner adjoining the mud road in about 6 months

- Fencing Requirements for Sub divisions – Charlie has e-mailed and spoken to the Tableland and Mareeba Shire Councils about the requirements

3. Correspondence:

- Correspondence Log. *Tabled*

4. Local Management Update:

- Leith Bouilly contacted Joe yesterday. An announcement will be made next week

5. SunWater Report:

- Bulk NSP: Insurance \$230K higher. Breakdown of Operation expenditure is in Appendix. 'Other Costs' includes \$412K (insurance, land tax, rates). Income from other sources – does it include Stanwell releases?

Action: Jim to check if the income from other sources includes Stanwell Hydro

- Non Routine over budget: was 48% of target for the 3 years- 5 yearly inspection was over budget

- Distribution NSP: 68% water used, 62% was the QCA assumed usage. Expenditure 108% of QCA target (QCA underestimated electricity, insurance and rates). Operational was over QCA target (insurance and property), Preventative maintenance \$166K above (weed control), corrective maintenance \$245K below QCA target (more pipe repairs this year than last year but

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they were minor so a lower cost than last year). 15% of 5 year budget on R&E, Annuity balance previously \$660,000 last year was \$1.5 million and estimated to be \$2.3 million by end of this financial year

- The MDIA Council expressed concern over the security of the annuity balance into the future
- Shutdowns: Have carried out a couple of R&E works, pipe repairs 1 - 2 shutdowns per week and short duration. 2015: Wet season channel scraping. No long shutdowns scheduled
- Water Ordering: Had an improvement over last 3 – 6 months. Water officers have been pushing hard. Have turned off and chained up a few offtakes after 5 warnings.

- Is it possible to reduce the 24 / 48 hour lead time from order to delivery? – Below balancing storage would be possible and computer could be pre-set.

Action: Charlie will look into shortening order to delivery time and report at next meeting

- Nardello's Bird Watching Area: Letters of objection sent by Sunwater and MDIA Council. No response from Tableland Regional Council
- Shed Meetings: None planned
- Barron River Releases: Unlikely to change. Releases for the channel are currently around 800-850ML/day.
- Daily release volume down on last couple of years but average release figure is up (less water going to cane as crops still being harvested, no rain so constant releases / no large fluctuations
- Fish Screens: Current fish screen is a bottle neck and will become a bigger problem as water usage increases. It was a flawed design and is of no advantage to irrigators. Designed for 1200ML/day. 750ML/day is most it's had through it. Will inundate at 850ML/day. Over 600ML/day causes turbulence and water goes backward. Has been looked at in last 2 weeks and engineers are looking at options to correct it and looking at trigger points as to when corrective action would need to be taken.

Action: SunWater to come back with corrective options and trigger points in March 2015

- Cost of corrective action is not in price path so any money spent would be above that.
- It is a SunWater design fault so irrigators should not be paying for it. It should not be coming out of the Annuity budget.
- Report from Water Officers to Maisel's that it is already a problem. Water has not been able to be delivered get water due to bottle neck. Channel never over capacity to Charlie's knowledge

Action: Charlie and Brad to have discussion on issue of water delivery

- Termination Fees: QCA determined termination fees to cover loss of revenue for movement between tiers during the life of the price path so that there is not cross subsidisation between tiers
- Peter Howe's situation of not receiving the low tariff rate for his parcels of water he purchased which is total of over 500ML and the water came from over 500ML entitlements

Action: Peter to send information to Colin Bendall for him to look into

- Channel Leakage: Ponding trials carried out on Chettle /Channel Road intersection – very little leakage detected. Currently no green grass out Emerald Creek channel where it has been reported to be leaking

Action: Charlie to have discussion with Bosnic's at Emerald Creek and Maisel's at Arriga re channel leakage areas to see if leaks are impacting them and if so what can be done

- Transfer of Water Channel to River: How come when water is transferred from river to channel you lose 20% but when you transfer from channel to river you don't get an extra 20%?

Action: Colin Bendall to look into transfer between channel & river

6. Barron WRP / ROP Review Update:

- Draft has been released. Submissions close 16th January 2015

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- There was a meeting with Minister Cripps on Monday morning. The Reference Panel has been directed to re-convene to discuss the Area A & B water issues. Transfer of water between zones / zone removal
- No proposed changes to carryover
- MDIACouncil Submission: Carryover Rules (removal of dam height and 31st December Cancellation triggers), ability for water distribution entity to be able to temporary transfer loss allocation and Nullinga – water allocation security (no forced transfer from MDWSS to Nullinga), new Nullinga allocations should have same reliability, water quality and pricing structure

Action: Joe and Bronwyn to draft ROP submission

7. Cairns Regional Council / Advance Cairns Future Water Requirement:

- Tableland CANEGROWERS position on Nullinga Dam is that we are not against the dam being built as long as irrigators do not have to pay for it. Furthermore current Barron River entitlement holders should not be forced to switch to the Nullinga system and the pricing structure, water reliability and water quality should be at least the same as the Barron System.
- Tableland CANEGROWERS position on Cairns City entering the Barron system is that with adequate compensation we could accept Cairns City accessing unregulated / hydro / environmental flow water from the bottom of the system (Lake Placid) but we do not accept that they should access irrigation allocation as this will inflate water prices.
- Options: 4000ML that is currently in the Barron ROP, modernising MDWSS and taking the loss allocation, pipeline from Quaid's dam into the Barron River, Mulgrave Aquifer, Mulgrave Mill has 20,000ML entitlement that could be accessed, Nullinga Dam (longer term).

8. Review of MDIACouncil for 2015

- MDFVGA and TCG are happy to leave the MSC rep position vacant at this point in time
- Send a letter to existing zone & industry reps to see if they want to stay on
- Insurance needs to be proven if not a MDFVGA or TCG rep

Action: Bronwyn and Joe to write to Committee Members about MDIACouncil positions

9. Other Business:

- Lease Land Behind Dump – Currently lease by V Kazim. As part of the lease agreement the channel was meant to be fenced but this has not happened.

Action: Charlie Martens to follow up on fencing of lease land behind the dump

- Re-lift: Dangerous to encourage growers to water off peak as Sunwater won't be able to manage distribution / flows. The more even the releases and distribution the better.

Action: Bronwyn to put re-lift on agenda for next meeting

10. Next Meeting Date & Agenda Items: TBC

Meeting closed: 12.41pm