

our
customers.



At a glance

- Scheme service targets were achieved for most regions, with more appropriate future targets introduced for Bundaberg.
- The Macintyre Brook CS system is making usage monitoring and future planning easier for customers.
- New web-based information was introduced for Irrigator Advisory Committees.
- Diversifying the business through growth of facilities management services to commercial customers made a significant contribution to SunWater's annual revenue.

SunWater understands its customers' need for cost-effective and reliable water services and tailors its water supply solutions to ensure sustainable growth can be successfully achieved for mutual benefit.

Irrigator Advisory Committees (IACs)

SunWater continued to meet regularly with members of its 18 IACs to discuss operational matters.

An IAC page is now available on SunWater's website, publishing information and meeting outcomes to all interested customers. Committee members and other irrigators are able to view current and previous minutes, storage reports, committee member details, and news and events for each scheme.

Effort continues to be directed towards conducting one-on-one meetings with SunWater's commercial and industry-based customers to ensure issues are identified and appropriately addressed and to maintain existing strong relationships.

Achievement of scheme service targets

SunWater set scheme service targets for 21 of its water schemes. The targets specific to each scheme cover:

- Timing and duration of planned and unplanned shutdowns
- Length of notice given to customers for planned and unplanned shutdowns
- Time to repair meters causing restrictions to supply
- Number of interruptions to supply, and
- Response time to customer complaints.

Across all SunWater schemes, 153 exceptions to the achievement of service targets were reported during the year. SunWater achieved its customer service targets for all regions except:

- Mareeba, with three exceptions reported regarding complaints that were not actioned within the agreed timeframes
- Burdekin, with three exceptions on the number of customers exceeding greater than six interruptions
- Mary River, with one exception on the number of customers exceeding greater than six interruptions, and
- Bundaberg, where 146 exceptions were reported, largely as a result of unplanned shutdowns which caused customers to exceed greater than six interruptions.

These exceptions related to:

- 1 notification exception on planned event
- 2 duration exceptions on planned event
- 20 duration exceptions on unplanned shutdowns
- 121 exceptions on the number of customers exceeding greater than six interruptions, and
- 2 complaints not responded to within the agreed 21-day period.

The performance monitoring of the Bundaberg scheme was based on a cumulative annual target of six exceptions before a notification exception is triggered. Following consultation with the Bundaberg Irrigator Advisory Committee, more appropriate service targets were set. Changes include increasing the maximum number of interruptions (planned/unplanned events) to 10 per customer per water year, and increasing the unplanned shutdown duration to 72 hours. Similar infrastructure maintenance regimes are in place elsewhere in Queensland (Ayr and Mareeba) and are based on a trigger of 10 exceptions. These new service targets take effect from 1 July 2009. (See also case study on page 32.)

Pictured: Mark Goos from Mulgowie
Farming in the Burdekin is one of many irrigators utilising the benefits of SunWater's online technology to make more informed business decisions.

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National Performance Reporting

SunWater participated in the National Water Commission's National Performance Reporting for Rural Water Service Providers for the second consecutive year. The report provides the NWI with information about the performance of SunWater's irrigation water supply schemes compared to similar services provided in other areas. Information about the physical and financial performance of irrigation services at the bulk water and distribution system level is included. The report is available to the public and can be accessed on the National Water Commission's website www.nwc.gov.au.

Continuous Sharing

The Continuous Sharing (CS) system provides customers with a more efficient way to manage their water accounts. Under this system, individual customers can monitor and manage their water account balance. It eliminates the need for water accounts to be reset at the start of each water year, and customers are able to plan further ahead with greater confidence.

Throughout the reporting period, further progress was made on the development of new modelling techniques to assess CS proposals against Water Resource Plan objectives. SunWater used new hydrologic modelling techniques in the Macintyre Brook system to assess and develop a proposal to allow carryover of cap under CS. With the support of scheme customers, a submission has been made to the DERM to amend the Border Rivers ROP. SunWater and the DERM are now working through issues arising from the submission.

Since the start of the new CS water accounting system in Macintyre Brook in July 2008, customers have been able to access a detailed daily inventory of their water account balances and better plan their future water needs.



Case study: SunWater provides secure and reliable service

With a portfolio of around 5,000 customers from the commercial, industrial, mining and agricultural sectors, SunWater needs to be focused on providing the most effective and efficient water supply solutions available.

Customers like Stanwell Corporation rely on SunWater staff to deliver essential water supplies which are required for the power company's steam turbine operation to meet Queensland's ongoing demand for electricity.

Stanwell engaged SunWater in 1992 and since then SunWater has continued to provide a secure and reliable service through SunWater's 28 km water pipeline and pumping network.

SunWater achieved its agreed infrastructure outage targets for the Stanwell power station for the year, further cementing their professional relationship.

SunWater ensured all planned or unplanned outages on the pumps and pipeline needed to transport the power company's 24,000 ML allocation, did not impact Stanwell's ability to deliver on its own customer commitments.

Scott Funch and Stanwell Corporation's Scott McGraw (right) discuss pump maintenance at the Stanwell Pump Station in Rockhampton.

Part A tariff rebate scheme

The Queensland Government's Irrigators Fixed Water Charges Rebate Scheme continued this year, giving irrigators the ability to claim up to \$10,000 per annum towards their fixed water charges in recognition of the continuing tough environmental conditions.

At the start of 2008-09, irrigators in four SunWater supply schemes were eligible for some relief from Part A charges as a result of the government's rebate scheme. As a result of solid inflows to a number of schemes during the second and third quarters of the year, the number of schemes eligible for the rebate reduced to one by the end of the financial year.

The Queensland Government will not be extending the rebate scheme beyond the eligibility deadline of 30 June 2009.



Case study: Water futures

SunWater is continuing to play a key role in the long-term strategic management of water through its involvement in a number of key water advisory and research groups.

In the Burdekin, SunWater is one of the founding members of the Lower Burdekin Water Futures Group (LBWF).

The group, which was set up in 2006, brings together a cross-section of organisations that have a direct interest in the management of water, such as irrigators, researchers, water boards, councils and varied government agencies.

The formation of the group ensures greater coordination and better alignment of stakeholder efforts and enables members to have a holistic focus on water management.

The group's primary aim is to encourage long-term strategic thinking about water management and to deliver economic, social and environmental outcomes that ensure the region's sustainability.

The group addresses a number of key water issues such as drainage and run-off and water and land manager coordination but also looks at the integration of interests between science, policy, management and the community.

Looking to the future - (from left) Lower Burdekin Water Futures farmer Michael Hoey, Burdekin Shire Mayor Lyn McLaughlin, CSIRO's Dr Keith Bristow and SunWater Resource Compliance Officer Fiona Christie.

Collaborative investment

SunWater continued in its partnership with research and development corporations, governments, commodities groups and water providers to invest in research that provides useful information to a wide range of agricultural stakeholders.

This collaborative investment enables SunWater and its customers to benefit from a greater investment than what could be achieved individually and includes organisations such as:

- National Program for Sustainable Irrigation (NPSI), which seeks improved skills, knowledge and decision making of end users to enable practice change and more efficient and sustainable use and management of water.
- Irrigation Futures, which delivers irrigation research, education and training to growers, industry, governments and the communities to enable the investment into better irrigation methods and practice.
- The Cotton CRC, an industry program that supports the production of competitive cotton farming systems, high quality consumer-preferred cotton and increases the skills and knowledge of people in the cotton industry.
- The Burdekin Water Futures Group. Refer to case study above.