

Burdekin Haughton Customer Advisory Committee

Date: Wednesday 1 April 2026

Time: 9:00 am - 11:00 am

Location: Sunwater Clare Office (Cnr Satchel & George Streets, CLARE)

Attendees:

Customer representatives: Ariane Lleyden, Tom Wallwork, Mario Barbagallo, Chris Scovazzi, Robert Stockham, Greg Watson, David Paine, Terry Granshaw, David Zeller

Sunwater representatives: Kayleen Walsh (Sunwater Board Member); Colin Bendall (Executive General Manager Operations), William Weaver (General Manager North), Aaron Elphinstone (Operations Manager North), Tim Murphy (Water Trading Manager, online), Sarah O’Grady (Customer Engagement Advisor, online)

Other representatives: Rob Hunt (Sustainable Agriculture Program Manager at NQ Dry Tropics)

Apologies: Scott Stevens, Evan Shannon, Sib Rapisarda

Minutes:

Agenda items		
Item no.	Item	Presenter
1	Meeting open	All
2	Previous meeting actions	Aaron Elphinstone
3	North Queensland Dry Tropics Burdekin Tailored Automation Project	Rob Hunt
4	Upcoming Burdekin Haughton WSS sale	Tim Murphy
5	Operations update	Aaron Elphinstone
6	Customer systems update	Colin Bendall
7	Customer engagement	Sarah O’Grady
8	General business	Aaron Elphinstone
9	Meeting close	

1. Meeting open

Meeting opened at 9:00am. Introductions and Acknowledgement of Country delivered.

2. Previous meeting actions

Sunwater provided an update on previous meeting actions.

3. North Queensland Dry Tropics Burdekin Tailored Automation Project

NQ Dry Tropics provided an overview of the Burdekin Tailored Automation Project, including the Expression of Interest (EOI) process for irrigators.

- **Member question:** Member requested clarification on the criteria for receiving funding support.
- **NQ Dry Tropics response:** NQ Dry Tropics advised the project aims to deliver automation across approximately 3,500 hectares, with a particular focus on irrigation in the Burdekin. Applications are being assessed on a first-come, first-served basis.
- **Member question:** Members asked where other applicants were located and whether corporate entities are eligible to participate.
- **NQ Dry Tropics response:** NQ Dry Tropics confirmed applicants are from a wide range of locations and that all entities, including corporates, are eligible.
- **Discussion:** Discussion about incentives and caps of the funding support, and the indicative cost per hectare for transitioning to automation.

4. Upcoming Burdekin Haughton WSS sale

Sunwater provided an update on the upcoming Burdekin Haughton WSS water sale of 15,000 ML of medium priority water.

- **Member question:** Member asked whether it was river allocation, bulk allocation or the distribution system.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater confirmed the allocation is river allocation. Sunwater advised if customers require additional access to the distribution network, this will be subject to standard operational checks. Existing rules will continue to apply, including peak flow entitlement rates.
- **Member question:** Member asked what the reserve price would be.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater confirmed the reserve price will be \$300/ML – this price has been set based on recent sales.
- **Member question:** Members asked about rising groundwater levels in the Burdekin and whether Sunwater has discussed introducing additional water into the Burdekin River Irrigation Area (BRIA).
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater confirmed there have been discussions and it will be a consideration if a customer wants to take it through to the distribution network. Sunwater noted the delivery location will be a key factor in determining whether the Operations team can deliver the additional water.
- **Discussion:** Discussion regarding whether prospective buyers would be required to submit a business case or similar documentation as part of the bidding process.

5. Operations update

Sunwater provided an update on operational matters including the wet season, channel conditions, and 2026 and tentative 2027 dates for shutdowns.

- **Member question:** Member asked whether Sunwater could introduce a protocol to quarantine areas where Itch Grass is identified in the Burdekin, and whether there are opportunities to raise awareness and provide education to Sunwater staff.
- **ACTION:** Sunwater to raise awareness among staff and investigate the introduction of a quarantine protocol when itch-grass is found.
- **Member comment:** Member offered to share an Itch Grass factsheet with Sunwater.
- **ACTION:** CAC member to share an Itch Grass factsheet with Sunwater.

6. Customer systems update

Sunwater provided an update on Customer Systems, including the Orion Customer Authentication project, which will introduce multifactor authentication (MFA) for the customer portal and mobile app. Sunwater also provided an update on the CASPr rebate and introduced the Customer Systems Renewal project, which will replace the current Orion system.

- **Member question:** Member asked whether the current system could be upgraded.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater explained the system is about 12 years old and that some smaller upgrades and enhancements are planned to maintain functionality for a further three to five years.
- **Discussion:** Discussion about the process for placing water orders following the introduction of MFA. Customers noted phone-based authentication may present challenges due to increasing service issues associated with 5G coverage.
- **Member question:** Members asked about the cost of introducing SMS capability as part of MFA, and how many customers current order water via email.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised SMS capability would require a significant system enhancement with substantial associated costs, which Sunwater will share with CAC members.
- **ACTION:** Sunwater to revisit the MFA communications plan to ensure inclusion of cane grower representative groups.
- **Member question:** Member asked whether there's been any attempts to hack Sunwater's billing and other systems.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater confirmed there are regular attempts to hack its systems, with thousands of attempted attacks blocked each week. Sunwater advised robust firewalls and security systems are in place to manage cyber risks.
- **Discussion:** Discussion about customer survey and feedback mechanisms. A customer suggested that if phone surveys are undertaken, calls should be made directly by Sunwater representatives and originate from a clearly identifiable and legitimate Sunwater phone number.

7. Customer engagement

Sunwater presented the findings from the 2025 Customer Touchpoint Survey.

- **Member comment:** Member noted a customer had provided contact details through the survey but had not been contacted by Sunwater.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised it would investigate why follow-up contact had not occurred.

Member comment: Member expressed disappointment that Sunwater’s RAB submission stated most customers were supportive or agnostic to a RAB. They commented statements of this nature undermine Sunwater’s credibility.

8. General business

- **Member question:** Member requested a Lower Burdekin Rising Groundwater Project update.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater explained a newsletter will be issued and the Code of Practice is imminent. Sunwater has turned two bores on at different sites.

9. Meeting close

Meeting closed at 10:30am. Next meeting scheduled for **Wednesday 5 August**.

10. Actions

Action item	Owner	Status
Sunwater to raise awareness amongst staff and investigate the introduction of a quarantine protocol when itch-grass is found	Aaron Elphinstone	Closed
CAC member to share an Itch Grass factsheet with Sunwater	Member	Closed
Sunwater to share estimated SMS capability costs (as part of MFA)	Sarah O’Grady	
Sunwater to revisit MFA communications plan to include cane grower representative groups	Sarah O’Grady	
Sunwater to investigate why customer wasn’t contacted following completion of 2025 touchpoint customer survey	William Weaver	Closed. Operational staff met with the customer.
Sunwater to consider CAC feedback about potential customer phone survey methodology and implementation	Sarah O’Grady	

11. Approval and review

Chair:	Aaron Elphinstone
Minutes:	Sarah O’Grady
Date:	April 2026

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