

Callide Valley Customer Advisory Committee

Date: Wednesday 25 March 2026

Time: 1:00pm - 3:00pm

Location: Biloela Hotel, 20 Callide Street, Biloela

Attendees:

Customer representatives: Richard Fairley, Stephen Leighton, Benton Meissner, Greg Donges, Ross Shepherdson

Sunwater representatives: Colin Bendall (Executive General Manager – Operations), Craig Cahill (Regional General Manager – Fitzroy), Daryl Conway (Operations Manager), Caley Pearce (Customer Engagement Advisor), Megan Shea (Manager Security and Policy Manager).

Department representatives: Ariane Leyden, Scott Stevens

Apologies:

Minutes:

Agenda items		
Item no.	Item	Presenter
1	Meeting open	Daryl Conway
2	Previous meeting overview/ actions	Daryl Conway
3	Operations Update	Daryl Conway
4	Recharge Trench Investigation	Daryl Conway
5	Water Resources Update	Megan Shea
6	Kroombit Dam Safety Update	Daryl Conway
7	Customer Systems Update	Colin Bendall
8	Customer Touchpoint Survey Update	Caley Pearce
9	Meeting close	Daryl Conway

1. Meeting open

Meeting opened at 1:04 pm. Introductions and Acknowledgement of Country delivered.

2. Previous Actions

Previous minutes presented and previous actions discussed.

3. Operations Update

Sunwater presented an update on Callide Valley operations, including current storage levels at Callide and Kroombit dams.

- **Member question:** Member asked how much inflow has resulted from recent rainfall.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised that inflows were estimated to be approximately 13,000–14,000 megalitres (ML)
- **Member question:** Member asked whether releases would occur given inflows had not reached the threshold typically required.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised that while inflows did not reach the usual threshold, a release of approximately 2,500 ML to Callide Creek was planned to commence the following week. Sunwater advised releases may occur over an extended period to provide benefits to the area.
- **NOTE:** Sunwater has issued communication to customers advising releases have ceased due to repair works on the cone valve at Callide Dam. Releases are expected to recommence in May 2026.
- **Member question:** Member asked if the weir had spilled during the recent event.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised that a significant volume of water passed over the weir; however, the dam level was not at the point that would normally trigger releases. Sunwater also noted that water from the Awoonga pipeline is stored in Callide Dam for use by the power station and is considered when assessing storage levels.
- **Member question:** Member asked how long it had been since there had been releases from Kroombit Dam.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised that releases from Kroombit Dam commenced the previous week and noted the releases prior to this occurred approximately six years ago.

4. Recharge Trench Investigation

Sunwater presented an update on the recharge trenches, including the location and pictures of work that had been undertaken at two locations. The locations were determined through engagement with previous contractor.

- **Member question:** Member asked what material made up the deposited layer and whether it was porous.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised the material was predominantly silt. Sunwater noted that the impact of the silt layer on trench performance is not fully understood and may have been influenced by recent rainfall events.

- **Member question:** Member asked when a decision would be made regarding removal of the silt layer.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised that the current priority is to restore recharge flows and deliver water into the creek.
- **Member question:** Member asked what material was located beneath the trench.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised that at one location, the underlying material was suitable, while another trench was underlain by clay. Sunwater noted that discussions with the original installation team indicated challenges in identifying locations without clay during initial construction.
- **Member question:** Member asked whether the investigated trenches included cylinder structures.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised that cylinders were not present in the trenches assessed as part of the investigation.
- **Member question:** Member noted that cylinders were installed on their property and described observing water movement within the structure.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised that the benefits of the cylinders are not fully understood at this stage.
- **Member question:** Member asked whether Sunwater would allow landholders with recharge trenches on their properties to maintain the trenches themselves.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised that Sunwater holds the licence and responsibility for managing the recharge trenches.
- **Member discussion:** Members and Sunwater discussed recharge trench performance and potential benefits. Sunwater advised that investigations into recharge trenches are ongoing.
- **ACTION:** Sunwater to investigate potential partnership arrangements in relation to recharge trenches.

5. Water Resources Update

Sunwater presented an update on Callide Dam water resource forecasts, including revised water use assumptions for the power stations. Sunwater advised that the power stations have revised their pumping requirements and will draw down water currently stored in Callide Dam, including water transferred from Awoonga Dam. Sunwater advised that forecast information will be updated monthly and shared with CAC members.

- **Member question:** Member asked about town water supply and where Banana Shire Council (BSC) sources water to support additional housing and population growth.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised that BSC holds a capped high-priority (HP) allocation and a monthly entitlement. Sunwater noted if BSC requires additional water to support future growth, additional allocation would need to be secured through the appropriate processes.
- **Member discussion:** Member commented it would be of interest to understand how BSC or government would respond to population growth pressures, noting that additional allocation may need to be sourced from elsewhere.
- **Member question:** Member asked about groundwater monitoring, noting that fewer observation bores are currently used compared to previous years and queried whether more comprehensive monitoring would improve data quality

- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised groundwater monitoring varies across zones and the monitoring network was rationalised approximately ten years ago, based on the best information available at the time. Sunwater acknowledged that issues have since been identified in some zones and improvements are being considered.
- **Member question:** Member asked about bore log data and how groundwater information is assessed across the scheme.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised bore data across the region has been reviewed as part of current investigations. Sunwater noted discussions are underway with the Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers (DLGWV) to determine improved short-term and long-term groundwater monitoring approaches.
- **Member question:** Member asked whether recent inflows to Callide and Kroombit dams would result in an increase to 100 per cent Announced Allocations (AA).
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised groundwater monitoring is ongoing and that outcomes for specific zones are still being assessed.
- **Member question:** Member asked whether AA can change on a quarterly basis
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised AA can increase and cannot be reduced. Sunwater noted bore readings were scheduled to be undertaken shortly and any changes to AAs would be communicated through the usual channels.
- **Member question:** Member asked whether an increase to 100 per cent AA was likely in the current quarter.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised this was uncertain and may not occur this quarter or in the next water year.

6. Kroombit Dam Safety Works

Sunwater presented on proposed dam safety works at Kroombit Dam.

- **Member question:** Member asked what a passive anchor is and how it would be constructed.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised passive anchors involve reinforced concrete installed deep into the foundation and are designed to provide additional stability. Sunwater noted passive anchors require minimal ongoing maintenance. Sunwater clarified the proposed works have not yet been approved
- **Member question:** Member asked whether customers would be required to fund the works if government funding was not approved.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised the works form part of a Dam Improvement Project (DIP) which is not be funded by irrigation customers.
- **Member question:** Member asked whether the issue represented a current safety concern.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised the dam is safe under normal operating and flood conditions. Sunwater noted the works are intended to address risk under extreme flood scenarios and relate to compliance with contemporary dam safety standards.
- **Member question:** Member asked whether this issue existed at the time the dam was originally constructed.

- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised at the time of construction, Kroombit Dam met the applicable safety standards. Sunwater noted dam safety standards have evolved over time and similar issues are being addressed at dams across Australia as standards change.

7. Customer Systems Update

Sunwater provided an update on Customer Systems, including the Orion Customer Authentication project, which will introduce multi-factor 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 whether costs from other customer system projects would be passed on to customers
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised any costs associated with the current project are expected to be minor. Sunwater noted customer engagement will form part of the Customer Systems Renewal project to understand customer needs. Sunwater also advised some requirements are non-negotiable, including the need to meet contemporary cyber security standards.
- **Member question:** Member asked whether Sunwater had spoken with other utilities about their billing systems.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised while discussions with other utilities are possible, Callide Valley has bespoke water sharing and accounting arrangements. Sunwater noted these complexities require a tailored customer system rather than an off-the-shelf solution.

8. Customer Touchpoint Survey Update

Sunwater presented the findings from the 2025 Customer Touchpoint Survey.

- **Member question:** Member asked why the survey completion rate was low.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised while the completion rate was low, this is typical of online surveys. Sunwater also advised additional survey and engagement methods will be introduced in the coming year to improve participation.

9. General business

- **Sunwater question:** Sunwater invited members to provide feedback on the effectiveness of CAC meetings and sought views on whether members would prefer the CAC to be chaired by customers rather than Sunwater.
- **Member discussion:** Members advised they value the CAC forum as it provides an opportunity for multiple stakeholders to listen to issues, collaborate with other members, and engage directly with Sunwater. Members noted the forum gives them confidence issues raised are being heard and considered. Members indicated they appreciate timely responses and open discussion and were supportive of Sunwater continuing to chair the CAC.
- **Member discussion:** Member raised concerns regarding a Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) gauge, noting it was displaying an incorrect water level during the recent weather event. Members noted the information indicated significantly higher levels than were actually experienced, which caused confusion.

- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised the gauge in question is a BoM-owned asset and not maintained by Sunwater. Sunwater noted it was also contacted regarding the issue and has raised the matter with BSC and through Local and District Disaster Management Group (LDMG/DDMG) channels. Sunwater advised it is continuing to pursue clarity on community risk and escalation pathways.
- Sunwater further advised it maintains a regular program of checking and validating the gauges it relies on for operational and business decision-making. Sunwater noted the recent weather event was larger than many anticipated and learnings will be identified as part of post-event review processes.
- **Member discussion:** Members emphasised the importance of protecting water security in the Callide Valley and expressed strong concern about potential reductions to AA. Members advised water availability is critical to business viability and production, and loss of allocation would have significant impacts on livelihoods and the region. Members expressed concern those making decisions about AA may not fully understand the practical and long-term impacts on irrigators. Members also noted differences in pricing arrangements between Parts A and B and discussed the cost implications per ML.
- **Member question:** Member raised concern about the presence of ash in Callide Creek, noting they believed it may have originated from the power station.
- **Sunwater response:** Sunwater advised it was not aware of any releases from the power station's ash dam. Sunwater noted any such release would require appropriate environmental approvals.
- **ACTION:** Sunwater to confirm with the power station whether there have been any releases from the ash dam.

10. Meeting close

Meeting closed at 02:33pm. Next meeting scheduled for August 2026

11. Actions

Action item	Owner	Status
Sunwater to investigate potential partnership arrangements in relation to recharge trenches.	Daryl Conway	In progress
Sunwater to confirm with the power station whether there have been any releases from the ash dam.	Daryl Conway	In progress

12. Approval and review

Chair:	Daryl Conway
Minutes:	Caley Pearce
Date:	25 March 2026

Phone: 13 15 89

Email: customersupport@sunwater.com.au

Live chat: [sunwater.com.au](https://www.sunwater.com.au) (Monday to Friday, 8:30am – 4:30pm)

Post: PO Box 15536 City East QLD 4002

Fax: (07) 3036 6482

Delivering water for prosperity