

## Burdekin Haughton Customer Advisory Committee

**Date:** Thursday 3 April 2025

**Time:** 9:00 – 11:00am

**Location:** Sunwater Clare Office (Cnr Satchel and George Streets, Clare QLD); Teams

### Attendees

**Customer representatives:** Mario Barbagallo, Robert Stockham, Greg Watson, Scott Stevens, Evan Shannon, David Satori, Terry Granshaw, Angelo Licciardello, Allan Parker, Cameron Pirrone, Jo Martin, Julie Ardiach, Kayleen Walsh

**Sunwater representatives:** Aaron Elphinstone (Operations Manager North), Natalie Bain (GM Stakeholder Relations) Tracey Hough (First Nations Engagement Specialist), Matthew Pearce (Regulatory & Pricing Manager), Peter Piotto (Project Manager), Phillipa Tomasetig (Regional Administrator)

**Apologies:** Nil

### Minutes:

Agenda items		
Item no.	Item	Presenter
1	Meeting open and previous actions	Aaron Elphinstone
2	Irrigation Pricing update	Matt Pearce
3	Touchpoint Customer Survey 2024 update	Natalie Bain
4	Groundwater Project update	Peter Piotto
5	Operations update	Aaron Elphinstone
6	General Business	Aaron Elphinstone
7	Meeting close	Aaron Elphinstone

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## 1. Meeting Open

- Sunwater welcomed the group to the first Customer Advisory Committee (CAC) for the year.
- Acknowledgement of Country delivered.
- Agenda discussed and confirmed.
- Minutes of previous meeting were accepted.

**Member Question:** Can Sunwater follow up a Wilmar representative to attend meetings, as Ian Davies has left. Members suggested Peter Larson, noting decision would be Wilmar's.

**Sunwater Action:** Sunwater to follow up with Wilmar to appoint a Wilmar representative replacement.

- Decision made to switch agenda items 2 and 3.

## 2. Touchpoint Customer Survey 2024 update

- Sunwater presented on Touchpoint Customer Survey 2024 update from slide deck.

**Member Question:** The survey is Queensland-wide, can we see North's results to the survey?

**Sunwater Response:** Yes, we can identify the individual regions and customer types, as displayed in slide deck.

**Member Question:** When did Sunwater commence the customer surveys?

**Sunwater Response:** Sunwater commenced customer surveys in 2019. With each survey there is a different level of response and numbers have ranged from 300 to 900 customers every six months. In this survey, 97 customers from the North Region participated, which was nearly one third of all respondents.

**Member Question:** Can Sunwater send the survey to organisations for them to pass onto Sunwater customers?

**Sunwater Response:** The Touchpoint Customer survey is sent directly to each customer as a link. Sunwater could notify customer representative groups of each survey and request they promote it.

**Sunwater Action:** Sunwater to provide notification of release of survey every six months to customer representative groups.

**Member Question:** With regards to the irrigation component in terms of satisfaction, could this be impacted by their recent interactions with water operators?

**Sunwater Response:** Irrigators are Sunwater's biggest customer, so yes, this result can be impacted by interactions with local staff, however there is a free text field in the survey in which we can help identify areas of concern or positivity.

**Member Question:** Sunwater invoices have been a problem for a long time, they are very confusing to read, and a lot of customers cannot make sense of them. Can this be changed? Could you do a video tutorial?

**Sunwater Response:** Will take this onboard and discuss this with the Sunwater Billing Team for improvements and possibly simplification.

**Sunwater Action:** Sunwater will create an online tutorial for customers to help them understand their invoices.

## 3. Irrigation Pricing update

- Sunwater presented an update on Irrigation Pricing for the next Price Path (starting July 2025).

**Member Question:** Comparing the prices displayed on the slide; RAB vs Annuity, this is four years vs paying forward 34 years. Is this a fair comparison?

**Sunwater Response:** Yes, we believe it is a fair comparison: this is a summary of the next four years of data that QCA has recommended. It would be meaningless to present 34 years of prices.

**Member Question:** Sunwater need to query the price rise for the Giru Area, growers in that area do not receive the same level of service.

**Sunwater Response:** There is no evidence that different levels of service are provided.

**Member Comment:** Giru Growers have to pay more than others in BRIA, for example replacement pumps post flood events, in comparison to other growers.

**Sunwater Response:** Every scheme will have irrigators affected differently in different areas by flood events.

### 3. Groundwater Project update

- Sunwater presented an update on the Lower Burdekin Rising Groundwater Mitigation Project from the slide deck.

**Member Question:** With regards to the HDPE H10 lining, will the Supplier have enough time to source the material prior to the shutdown?

**Sunwater Response:** Yes, suppliers that have responded in the tender process have indicated that they can source and undertake works during the upcoming 2025 shutdown.

**Member Question:** How long is the section of H10 that is being repaired with HDPE lining? 2.4 km?

**Sunwater Response:** Bay 4 section of H10 is 2.6 km long.

**Member Question:** Does Sunwater currently have monitoring equipment in Gladys Lagoon?

**Sunwater Response:** Yes, Sunwater has automated the operation of Gladys Lagoon, which includes constant level monitoring.

**Member Question:** What is the average depth of the bore holes undertaken in the first round of test drilling?

**Sunwater Response:** The first lot of drill holes were to a depth of 12-15 m. Moving forward, the second round of drilling will look to go deeper to locate good water flow.

**Member Question:** Is Sunwater only drilling on Crown Land? Can Sunwater look at utilising existing bore holes that are situated on privately owned land?

**Sunwater Response:** Currently the project has only been drilling holes on Sunwater land. Accessing privately-owned land is not currently in the bounds of the project although this could change moving forward.

**Member Question:** Where will this water be used, if not on farm?

**Sunwater Response:** The Code of Practice (CoP) will provide the rules to govern the disposal of extracted water. Sunwater will also likely need relevant environment authorities for possible treatment of water prior to disposal.

**Member Question:** With regards to RH5 drain, it is currently scoured out and backs water into paddocks during floods. It was supposed to be turned into a pipeline – why has this not happened?

**Member Comment:** RH5 was never designed as a supply channel, only a drain, but over time farmers' practices have changed.

**Sunwater Response:** RH5 pipeline was part of a larger modernisation business case Sunwater put together that did not receive funding. Sunwater are looking at how we might break that larger business case down into smaller projects to be able to seek funding at some point in the future.

**Member Comment:** RH5 pipeline was originally proposed as part of the LMA.

**Member Question:** Why are the drop boards not being removed in a flood event?

**Sunwater Action:** Investigate removal of drop boards as an operational issue.

**Member Comment:** With regards to the Davidson Road drain, there is a lot of monitoring gear situated in a fast-flowing drain. The water needs attenuation time for the nutrients to be removed from the water – it needs to be slow moving water for this to happen.

**Sunwater Response:** Agree and clarified that the monitoring equipment belonged to DAF.

**Member Question:** Will farmers need to get approval to feed into the Sunwater groundwater disposal drainage system?

**Sunwater Response:** At this stage the CoP will set out the guidelines for Sunwater to dispose of water. Unsure as to if or how that might apply to growers.

**Member Comment:** QFF is monitoring where the CoP is sitting, and it has been flagged. QFF will look to provide feedback on behalf of their growers.

**Member Question:** Who was on the original science panel for investigation?

**Sunwater Response:** Sunwater have used and will continue to use a number of expert consultants on the Groundwater Project.

**Member Question:** When it floods it is in Sunwater's ROP that we discharge into the river.

**Sunwater Response:** Outflow from the Haughton Balancing Storage during the recent weather events was through the overflow (same structure as the outlet) as a result of the rainfall and surface runoff into the storage.

**Sunwater Action:** Consider if there are any options to prevent / reduce outflow during a similar weather event.

**Member Question:** How much money has been spent on the project so far?

**Sunwater Response:** Round figures project spend is in the order of \$3M to date. There has been a considerable amount of work done on approvals and design. Generally, all the work / time for projects is in the planning and design, but all the spend is through construction generally at the end of a project.

**Member Question:** How many recycle pits are in the BRIA and is there any investigations on the effect they have on the groundwater?

**Member Response:** There was a study done 10 years ago in the Mulgrave and Mona Park areas, and some recycle pits in the Mulgrave area had less loss than evaporation levels, so no seepage. Now though there are some recycle pits where the underground water is the higher than the bottom of the recycle pit. Possibly funding could be sought to engage BBIFMAC to install level sensors.

**Sunwater Question:** Are any farmers using bores to discharge water in the GBA?

**Member Response:** Some farmers are using bores to keep the underground down.

#### 4. Operations update

- Sunwater presented an update on the Operations update on the slide deck.

**Member Question:** If the Burdekin River works were cancelled, would this reduce the length of the shutdown required?

**Sunwater Response:** We will need to review the works currently booked in for the shutdown to determine if it can be shortened.

**Member Question:** Farmers can't work around the weather. Given the current weather conditions and delays in planting, can the shutdown be delayed a week?

**Sunwater Response:** Sunwater needs shutdowns to undertake the works, but we are happy to work with customers and can try to adjust to suit the planting season.

**Member Question:** Can the upcoming 7 June Shutdown be delayed a week to 14 June?

**Sunwater Action:** Check if the shutdown can be moved to 14 June. Review and confirm it can start one week later.

**Member Question:** is Sunwater eligible for grant funding for flood recovery?

**Sunwater Response:** We are currently still assessing the flood damage. Sunwater keep records of all flood damage for insurance purposes, but not sure if we are eligible for any funding.

## 5. General Business

- Next CAC will be in August, date to be confirmed with members.

## 6. Meeting Close

- Meeting ended at 10.50am.

## 7. Approval and Review

Chair:	Aaron Elphinstone
Minutes:	Phillipa Tomasetig
Date:	3 April 2025

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