

Callide Valley Customer Advisory Committee

Date: Tuesday 19 August 2025

Time: 1pm - 3pm

Location: Biloela ANZAC Memorial Club

Attendees

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

Sunwater representatives: Daryl Conway (Operations Manager Biloela), Megan Shea (Water Security & Policy Manager), Letisha Lim (Stakeholder Relations Manager - Operations), Caley Pearce (Stakeholder Relations Advisor, online)

Department representatives: Scott Stevens (online), Ariane Leyden (online), Jarred Mafua (online)

Council representatives: Chandrasiri Jayalath

Apologies: Ashley Jensen (Banana Shire Council), Anthony Lipsys (Banana Shire Council)

Minutes:

Agenda items		
Item no.	Item	Presenter
1	Meeting open	Daryl Conway
2	Purpose and expectations	Letisha Lim
3	Callide Valley scheme overview	Daryl Conway
4	Water security and policy	Megan Shea
5	Kroombit Dam update	Daryl Conway
6	General business	Daryl Conway
7	Meeting close	Daryl Conway

1. Meeting open

- Meeting opened 1:10pm.
- Introductions conducted.
- Acknowledgement of Country delivered.

2. Expectation and purpose

- Sunwater presented on purpose of the Customer Advisory Committee (CAC) and the expectations of members.
- Member asked what happens to customer survey feedback, mentioning they provide feedback, but Sunwater does not follow-up with them.
 - Sunwater explained the survey is anonymous and follow-up is only possible if contact details are provided.
 - Sunwater advised that the next customer survey is scheduled for November, and that high-level results would be shared at the following meeting.
- Member asked if Sunwater monitored PFAS levels.
 - Sunwater acknowledges concerns about PFAS in groundwater. Sunwater engages with the power station, which has a comprehensive PFAS monitoring system.
 - Sunwater to invite a representative from Callide Power Station to the next CAC meeting to discuss their PFAS monitoring program with the group **(ACTION)**.
- Sunwater asked the members about their communication preferences.
 - Members confirmed SMS and email are preferred.

3. Callide Valley scheme overview

- Sunwater presented on the Callide Valley Water Supply Scheme (WSS).
- Member asked what happens to the power station's water order if it's not used – specifically whether it remains in the dam, held as a balance.
 - Sunwater clarified that unused water held in Callide Dam for the power station is tracked as a balance and subject to monthly evaporation and seepage losses.
 - If the power station holds 10 per cent of the dam's total volume, it incurs 10 per cent of the total losses. Evaporation is measured using an onsite pan and applied proportionally across the dam's total storage area. Seepage is calculated using a formula based on dam volume.
 - At higher dam levels, the power station may choose to zero or even run a negative balance, meaning they temporarily use more than their allocation. This must be repaid in accordance with operational rules before the dam drops below a specified level.
 - Sunwater confirmed the power station currently holds a positive balance in the dam, with a graphic to be presented later in the meeting showing current storage levels.
- Member asked how much water the power station can move from Awoonga to Callide in a 24-hour period.
 - Sunwater replied approximately 85 ML per day.

- Member raised concerns about PFAS contamination from the power station and asked whether Banana Shire Council (BSC) is mixing bore water with PFAS-affected water.
 - BSC advised that dam and bore water are blended prior to delivery, and PFAS levels in the supplied water are very low. Bore water quality is actively monitored.
 - When asked for specific PFAS levels, BSC responded that figures were not available at the meeting, but confirmed levels are below regulatory thresholds. BSC can provide detailed data upon request.

4. Water security and policy

- Sunwater presented on water security and policy.
- Member asked whether an allocation above 100 per cent could be announced if there is excess water is available in a scheme.
 - Sunwater advised that allocation decisions are governed by the Water Plan and cannot be made independently by Sunwater. The Operations Manual for the Callide Valley WSS, which Sunwater must comply with, states that the volume of water that can be taken cannot exceed the nominal volume stated on a water allocation multiplied by the announced allocation. These rules have been developed to ensure they meet the outcomes and objectives of the plan. The Water Plan modelling considers inflows, existing allocations, environmental needs, and groundwater recharge before determining if surplus water is available.
 - Callide Valley is managed under the Fitzroy Water Plan, which is currently under review. A draft plan is expected in the next 12 – 18 months.
- Member asked if long-range weather forecasts are incorporated into Sunwater's modelling.
 - Sunwater responded that while they do not include long-range forecasts in their modelling, they maintain close communication with the Bureau of Meteorology, including receiving pre-wet season briefings. Sunwater monitors changing conditions and updates its operational approach accordingly.
- A member expressed concern about perceived negativity in the Callide Valley modelling and the potential for future cutbacks.
 - Sunwater acknowledged the concern and highlighted that drought response plans are being developed for schemes, with Callide Valley identified as a high priority.
 - These plans will assess operational triggers such as low storage levels, alternative pumping options, and water sharing rules. Critical water sharing arrangements will be considered to support continuity of supply during drought conditions.
 - To this point, Sunwater is meeting with local government and the Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers (DLGWV) next month to progress drought response planning for the Nogo Mackenzie scheme.
 - A member raised concerns about water security, noting that irrigators want their current allocations (e.g. 500 ML) to remain stable, even if past allocations were higher (e.g. 900 ML). They noted a previous 10-year averaging reduced allocations across the Valley.
 - Sunwater responded that it does not have the authority to change the volume that is stated on a water allocation. Any changes to water allocations must be made by the Minister for Water under the *Water Act 2000 (Qld)* through the Water Plan. Sunwater does announce how much of the volume on a customer's water allocation can be taken each year under the announced

allocation framework outlined in the Operations Manual and based on the Water Plan, and this is periodically reviewed so that it can be increased if the modelling/inflows are favourable.

- Member asked whether Sunwater uses models that include low, medium, and high forecast scenarios.
 - Sunwater confirmed this data is available and offered to update the dam level forecast graphs for the next meeting to reflect these different scenarios.
- Members expressed concern the current modelling could be used by the DLGWV to justify permanent reductions in announced allocations for irrigators.
 - Sunwater recommended that members take any opportunity to provide feedback during Water Plan consultations and make their views clear, particularly regarding allocation security and modelling impacts.
- Sunwater presented on water sharing rules, with a focus on proposed changes to the announced allocation (AA) in Callide Zone 8B. Engagement with customers in the scheme is planned to discuss these changes.
 - Sunwater requested access to any private bore data members may hold to support further analysis **(ACTION)**.
 - Member noted observation bore data is available on a government website, though it can be difficult to access.
 - Member requested that Sunwater publish relevant data on its own website to improve accessibility for customers. Sunwater to consider publishing bore and modelling data on its website **(ACTION)**.
 - DLGWV added stakeholder consultation is important for understanding views on the proposed changes. It was noted that monitoring bores may not reflect conditions experienced by individual irrigators, making private data particularly valuable.
 - DLGWV confirmed Sunwater's work to date has addressed most legislative requirements. Data is expected to be provided to the DLGWV in October.
- Sunwater is aiming to engage with customers and Council on the Operations Manual (OM) amendment in early October.

5. Kroombit Dam update

- Sunwater presented on planned improvement works at Kroombit Dam.
- Member asked whether the proposed works would impact dam operations.
 - The Kroombit Dam safety improvement project is still in early stages. Sunwater responded that timing is being considered carefully to minimise impacts. The project proposal involves installing 50 anchors, spaced five metres apart and 11 metres deep. The preferred timing is between August and October.
- Member asked about the cost of the works.
 - Sunwater advised that costs are not yet known as the scope of the works is still being defined.
- Member asked about the status of Paradise Dam.
 - Sunwater replied that the current proposal is to construct a full replacement dam wall downstream of the existing structure.

6. General business

- Member asked about the safety of Callide Dam.
 - Sunwater confirmed that the question was in relation the intermittent occurrences of vibration during gate operation. Sunwater advised in 2021 it carried out investigations and work at the dam to find the best possible solution to address gate vibrations. Sunwater completed on-site works as part of the Callide Dam Gates Project in late-2022. Part of the work included strengthening each gate structure, upgrading the gate control system and replacing gate seals. Sunwater noted Callide Dam is operating at a reduced level (0.5 m below the full supply level FSL).
- Member queried about the inflows from the 2015 flood and whether releases are now more controlled.
 - Sunwater replied that under similar conditions the operation of the gates won't make a notable difference as the volume of water flowing is so significant.
- Member queried about the total discharge of the 2015 flood.
 - Sunwater confirmed the total daily discharge was about double the capacity of the dam.
 - Member queried about the automation of the gates and the override.
 - Gates are operated hydraulically. They are set to open automatically if the dam level reaches full level. To manually override (open at a lower level) we can manually pump water into the chambers that control the gate openings.

7. Meeting close

Meeting closed at 2.30pm.

Next meeting scheduled for late November 2025.

Action Item	Action Owner	Status of Action
Sunwater to invite the Power Station to the next CAC meeting to discuss PFAS monitoring with the group.	Daryl Conway	In progress
Sunwater to consider publishing bore and modelling data on its website.	Megan Shea	In progress
Sunwater requested access to any private bore data members may hold to support further analysis	Members/Customers	In progress

8. Approval and review

Chair:	Daryl Conway
Minutes:	Caley Pearce
Date:	19 August 2025