

Dawson Valley Customer Advisory Committee

Date: Tuesday 25 March 2025

Time: 09:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Location: Hotel Theodore

Attendees

Customer representatives: Scott Becker, Andrew French, Greg Hutchinson, Mitch Anderson, Caitlin Loader (online), Kirk Anderson, Simon Green

Sunwater representatives: Daryl Conway (Operations Manager – Biloela), Jason Smith (General Manager – Central), Letisha Lim (Stakeholder Relations Manager – Operations), Caley Pearce (Stakeholder Relations Advisor), Matthew Pearce (Regulatory & Pricing Manager) (Online), Megan Shea (Water Security & Policy Manager) (Online)

Department representatives: Maxine Kerr (Dept. Local Government, Water & Volunteers) (Online), Cr. Ashley Jensen (Banana Shire Council) (Online)

Apologies: None

1. Minutes:

Agenda items		
Item no.	Item	Presenter
1	Meeting open and previous actions	Daryl Conway (DC)
2	Touchpoint Customer Survey – 2024 Update	Letisha Lim
3	Update Dawson Valley Water Supply Scheme investigations	DC
4	Pricing Update	Matt Pearce (online)
5	Update Water Plan Review – ROL and OM	Megan Shea (Online)
6	General business	DC
7	Meeting close	DC

2. Meeting open

- Acknowledgement of Country delivered.
- Attendees introduced and apologies noted.
- Agenda discussed and confirmed.

Outstanding Actions		
Action	Update	Status
Timing for entering meter reads	It takes a week to read all meters in the scheme, when the file is received by Customer Accounts the file is imported the same day. Understand end of year is important and investigating if meter read files can be submitted daily to address the issue.	Open
Customer communication	Investigated the issue with mobile numbers and identified the cause (human error). Retraining of team members to ensure communication is issued from Sunwater alias not a mobile number. Noted requirement to flag Upper Dawson or Lower Dawson in future announcements.	Closed
Options for resolving CAC matters	Escalation within Sunwater (Operations and Customer & Stakeholder Relations teams) including attendance at meeting.	Closed

- Re timing for meter reads update action update, member requested that Sunwater not upload the meter readings on 30 September (last day of the water year) as this prevents customers from uploading their own final read.

3. Touchpoint Customer Survey – 2024 Update

- Sunwater presented the results from the 2024 Customer Touchpoint Survey.
- Member asked how many people completed the survey. Sunwater answered over 300 customers participated, including around 15 from DVWSS (from 100 in scheme). Sunwater explained that low completion rates can skew the results which is why regular surveying is important to show trends over time.

4. Update Dawson Valley Water Supply Scheme Investigations

- Sunwater presented on the DVWSS Investigation as part of the Regional Water Assessment (RWA) process.
- Member asked why Sunwater was pursuing multiple options when Nathan Weir was the only one ranked, and if Sunwater would get State and Federal funding if it was low listed. Sunwater replied that the RWA reviews shortlisted options and makes recommendations. Sunwater may still pursue other options. The RWA conversation was more open around all potential Dawson infrastructure. Member stated they're understanding was that the RWA was running in parallel with the Water Plan review.
- Member asked whether Sunwater would include Paranui Weir. Sunwater replied they have put forward the options that were presented on.
- Member asked what happens after assessment. Sunwater replied that the water assessment makes recommendations to the Minister, they are put to the schemes for discussion. Any work completed is valuable regardless of the RWA outcome.

- Sunwater stated that ecological surveys were being continued by Sunwater at the Nathan Weir site and wanted to ensure CAC members were aware of the work.
- Landholders are being contacted to seek approval to undertake the studies. Member shared they had been contacted in relation to the work.

5. Price Update

- Sunwater presented an update on Irrigation Pricing for the next Price Path (starting July 2025), noting the QCA's final recommendation was an 8.8 per cent reduction on Sunwater's proposal – an improvement from the 12.9 per cent reduction in the QCA's draft report. Member stated that the improvement is only an improvement for Sunwater, and irrigators still need to pay. Sunwater replied that financial viability is necessary for long-term operation and sustainability of the scheme, and that the QCA's final position still leaves Sunwater with a significant gap to cover.
- Member asked if the \$40M reduction in operating costs recommended by QCA was for the new billing system (CASPr), and if Sunwater still pursuing the project. Sunwater confirmed there is still a need for a new billing system in the future that is fit for purpose. The bulk of the \$40M reduction (circa 75 per cent) comes from reductions to support costs allocated to renewals expenditure - the CASPr project accounts for less than \$4M of that reduction. Sunwater reminded member that the \$40M was over the entire 4-year price path.
- Member asked if Sunwater are confident QCA will approve the RAB in the next price path, as irrigators prefer it over an annuity. Sunwater replied the challenge is the work recommended as a condition of QCA's support takes time, effort and cost. Sunwater would only pursue it if all parties are supportive, as it takes 12 – 24 months of work to determine the pathway. Sunwater is unlikely to do this work (and incur this cost) without confidence that it will be supported as it would not be a good use of money.
- Member questioned whether profits from the DVWSS are used to fund other schemes, stating that Dawson makes a profit with huge positive annuity. Sunwater replied the accumulation phase of annuity means revenue outstrips expenditure, leaving an operating surplus. When the work is completed, it is reversed. Prices are set to run the scheme, and it is a cost recovery business. Profit is not coming from the irrigation customer base.
- Member stated Sunwater should charge the correct price to irrigators at the time, not with such long lead times, as it affects the annuity – we are not paying what the scheme is costing. Sunwater agreed that long lead times and forecasting uncertainty is one of the reasons it favours a switch to a RAB.

6. Update Water Plan Review – ROL and OM

- Sunwater presented on the Fitzroy Plan Review and how that impacts the ROL and OM.
- Member believed the next water model had been issued. Sunwater replied it had not been issued. The next CQ Water Plan working group meeting is scheduled for May 2025. The new model will be discussed then. Water modelling is moving to a new platform with a different set up and assumptions. The water plan states the model to be used to make decisions, and any changes to the ROL and OM still need to be assessed as per the current Fitzroy Water Plan.
- Member asked how Sunwater will gather feedback on carryover and differential from the CAC. Sunwater replied they have reviewed historic data and will regularly attend CAC meetings.
- Member queried if Sunwater was going to change the ROL and OM before the water plan. Sunwater explained it was inefficient and ineffectual to make the changes before the new model was available.
- Member stated that if SWIR water disappears it will impact the valley. Sunwater replied that the RWA is assessing the options and highlighted the importance of the new model.
- Member asked when the new model will be released. Sunwater replied that the Minister will release the approved model with the water plan. It is the Minister's decision if early access to the model is granted.

- Member asked if AAs had been reviewed since the flow event. Sunwater replied that given meter reads are being taken this week, that data will be used to review AAs. The flows may not have been enough to trigger the process.
- Member stated that AAs should be calculated after five days. Sunwater replied that it's two weeks post-flow or five working days after the start of the month.
- Member asked about the 20% differential work discussed at the previous meeting. Sunwater confirmed the paper from December 2024 states that we are waiting for the water plan, and we need to let that process run its course. The member stated that they may pursue a legal case. Sunwater replied they need to let the Department do its work and then review the operation of the scheme.
- Member stated that given all the opening season allocation is not used, could MP users go into a minus provision balance before EOWY. Sunwater replied they are not supportive of that argument. Changes in the scheme are not accounted for in the model. Assessment is needed to review how changes interact with the WASOs and EFOs. This assessment will be completed with the new model.
- Member stated that Sunwater should be prepared for a legal case if they believe MP customers should be treated the same, stating they would seek legal advice. Sunwater confirmed its commitment to engaging with all CAC members throughout the process.
- Discussion between Sunwater and members on whether MP and MPA will be treated the same, and when will it be reviewed. Sunwater advised that members can start sending items for review.
- Member asked whether the Glebe valves are working now. Sunwater replied that work is being done later in the week, but only one valve is run at a time.

7. General business

- Brief discussion on current AA (MPA 86 per cent, MP 66 per cent, Lower Dawson MP 100 per cent). Meter reads currently occurring in the scheme. Looking for a review of the scheme AA as soon as possible. Noted recent small inflows across the scheme.
- Discussion between members and Sunwater about minor operational changes to the scheme. Main point of discussion was the ability to transfer to MOSS outside of water harvesting or CSG transfer. Essentially to use MOSS as a balance storage for AA water. Sunwater will consider and pursue with the Department.
- Next meeting proposed for early June in Moura.

8. Meeting close

- Meeting closed 10:40am.

Actions

Action Item	Action Owner	Status of Action
Sunwater to share information on new models with CAC members if available prior to next meeting.	Megan Shea	Complete
Sunwater to provide more information on the assumed annuity scheme cash flows coming from irrigation customer base.	Matt Pearce	Complete

Approval and review

Chair:	Daryl Conway
Minutes:	Caley Pearce
Date:	25.03.2025