

Dawson Valley Customer Advisory Committee

Date: Tuesday 19 August 2025

Time: 9am - 11am

Location: Meeting Room, Community Hall and Youth Centre, Moura

Attendees

Representing customers: Ian Becker, Andrew French, Greg Hutchinson, Mitch Anderson, Kirk Anderson, Simon Green

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, Ariane Leyden, Jarred Mafua

Apologies: Scott Becker, Ashley Jensen (Banana Shire Council)

Minutes:

Agenda items		
Item no.	Item	Presenter
1	Meeting open	Daryl Conway
2	Operations overview	Daryl Conway
3	MOSS operations review	Megan Shea
4	Dawson Valley early investigations	Daryl Conway
5	General business	Daryl Conway
6	Meeting close	Daryl Conway

1. Meeting open

- Meeting opened 9:10am.
- Introductions conducted.
- Acknowledgement of Country delivered.

2. Operations update

- Sunwater presented on current operations in the Dawson Valley, including storage levels, upcoming maintenance works and metering.
 - Planned maintenance is scheduled for Glebe, Gylanda and Orange Creek weirs, which will temporarily interrupt release capacity for 10 days. Final details are still being confirmed with contractors.
- Member asked about specific works planned at Orange Creek Weir.
 - Sunwater expressed concern about the condition of the low-level outlet conduit. The planned work will permanently plug the conduit by dewatering the downstream side and maintaining low levels on the upstream side. Due to associated risks, the work will be carefully planned.
 - Sunwater noted the conduit is currently blocked with silt. A camera inspection last year was unable to travel far enough into the conduit to assess its condition. Sunwater plans to flush it and attempt grouting.
- Sunwater noted that works at Gylanda Weir are expected to have less operational impact, focusing on the inlet tower. Seasonal conditions may affect access and timing.
- Sunwater provided an update on metering works across the Dawson Valley. Approximately 20 meters have been replaced to date, with a rolling program planned over the next few years. Works are being scheduled to avoid disruption to irrigation, taking seasonal conditions into account.
- Member asked whether irrigators would be able to access telemetry data from the new meters.
 - Sunwater acknowledged the request and noted that while the issue has been raised, the appropriate tool or platform is still being determined. Sunwater is actively exploring options to make telemetry data accessible to customers.
- Member asked whether the telemetry could be integrated with existing irrigator systems.
 - Sunwater confirmed it understands the importance of integration and is committed to working through the issue to deliver a suitable solution for customers.

3. MOSS operations review

- Sunwater presented the Moura Off-Stream Storage (MOSS) modelling outcomes including base case, current case, and proposed case scenarios.
- Member asked how the proposed case affects environmental flow objectives (EFOs) at the Woodleigh node, particularly when water is taken below that point.

- Sunwater responded that the proposed scenario involves moving water from previously upstream locations, which influences flow patterns.
- Member questioned how the base case could exceed 100% (noting a figure of 113.9% at Woodley).
 - Sunwater explained that this is due to the frequency and volume of base flows, which are higher than required, a desirable outcome in this context.
- Member raised concerns about high seasonal base flows at Woodleigh in August, noting that this is typically the only month when water is released from the storage.
 - Sunwater clarified that August and September releases are operational and not natural events, which is why they are not listed as EFOs in the Water Plan.
- Member noted there may be minor benefits from operational changes.
 - Sunwater explained these have been assessed under the current Water Plan. Testing under the new Water Plan model would be required to understand impacts on Environmental Security Objectives (ESOs) and Water Allocation Security Objectives (WASOs).
 - Sunwater also suggested broader consideration of water sharing rules, including potential changes to the start of the water year or carryover arrangements.
- Member questioned the proposed case, to allow the MOSS to be refilled from on-stream weirs when they exceed their nominal operating level as stated in the Operations Manual.
 - Sunwater explained this approach would allow refilling during water harvesting events, as well as other opportunities. However, it may involve shifting water from one part of the system to another.
- Member expressed doubt about the minimal benefit shown in the modelling and suggested timing may be key e.g. whether the MOSS is full in December versus March.
 - Sunwater noted that while specific scenarios may appear beneficial, the modelling reflects long-term averages rather than isolated events.
 - Further discussion took place between members and Sunwater around the risks and uncertainties of moving water within the system. It was acknowledged that modelling outcomes are variable and depend on timing and natural inflows.
- Member asked how much water the nitrate plant takes from the MOSS and whether it was built specifically to support the plant.
 - Sunwater clarified the MOSS was constructed to generate yield in the system. While allocation was provided to the nitrate plant, the storage was not built solely for that purpose.
- Members discussed flow timing, noting that water from the MOSS doesn't always reach Moura Weir during the first flow event. It can take up to a week for flows to arrive, and up to 20 days to fill the MOSS.
 - Sunwater acknowledged that timing is critical and depends on river conditions. A member suggested that earlier pumping could reduce costs.
- Member asked why water couldn't be pumped if the MOSS has capacity and Moura Weir is overtopping.
 - Sunwater noted that any changes must be assessed under the current Water Plan. The Department will review the application, and Sunwater is working to access the new source

model. The Minister has extended the expiry of the Fitzroy Water Plan to 30 June 2028, with a draft plan expected in 12–18 months.

- Sunwater asked members whether to proceed with refining the modelling work.
 - Members agreed and requested modelling on timing of transfers into MOSS and impact on announced allocations (AA) (**ACTION**).
- Member asked how often water is released from the MOSS.
 - Sunwater responded that typically only one release occurs per season, with only one season in the past 15 years where the MOSS was not emptied.
 - Members discussed the possibility of two fill cycles per year, though Sunwater noted this would be rare.
- Members expressed interest in reviewing water sharing rules, including:
 - the timing of the water year (currently starting in October)
 - early announcements to avoid end-of-year water loss,
 - carryover arrangements – period and volume.
- Members praised the recent extension of the carryover period from one to two months, noting it better aligns with crop readiness. Suggestions included:
 - triggering increased carryover (e.g. from 10- 20 per cent) under certain conditions
 - adopting a sliding scale approach like Fairbairn Dam.
- Sunwater confirmed this is a timely opportunity to propose changes, as seen in other schemes like Pioneer, where scenario modelling was provided to the DLGWV ahead of the draft Water Plan.
- Members asked whether Sunwater has access to the new models.
 - Sunwater responded that it is liaising with the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) to gain access.
 - Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers (DLGWV) explained that access is typically granted at the commencement of the new plan, but draft access may be possible depending on model development. The Fitzroy model is understood to be complete, and scenario testing is underway. DETSI will determine access permissions.

4. Dawson Valley early investigations update

- Sunwater presented early-stage investigations into potential new water storages in the Dawson Valley.
- Member asked whether, within the Regional Water Assessment (RWA) scope, one of the priorities could be the permanent release of Strategic Water Infrastructure Reserve (SWIR), and whether that could impact demand for new weirs.
 - Sunwater confirmed both infrastructure and non-infrastructure options are being considered under the Central RWA, with SWIR being a key topic of discussion.
 - DLGWV added that scenario testing is planned, including the potential transition of SWIR into a general reserve.

- Member referenced Sunwater’s demand study and noted a preference for accessing water as SWIR allocation. They highlighted if SWIR was made permanently available, it could significantly reduce demand for new weirs. Both aspects should be considered together to ensure alignment between infrastructure planning and water availability.
 - Sunwater reiterated that SWIR is part of the broader mix of options being explored.
 - DLGWV confirmed that infrastructure and non-infrastructure scenarios will be run concurrently, with timing aligned to the RWA and the development of the new Water Plan.

5. General business

- DLGWV advised that it is currently seeking Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for unallocated water in selected regions. While the Fitzroy is not currently included, stakeholders and landholders can submit EOIs at any time.
 - Updates have been made to the Business Queensland website to support this process.
 - As part of the Unlocking Water Project, DLGWV is exploring opportunities to release water from the general reserve, with Fitzroy expected to be considered in approximately nine months.
- Member raised concerns about an email relating to a previous action, sent on 12 August regarding Medium Priority (MP) and High Priority (HP) water pricing and scheme profitability. Member noted that a table previously used to demonstrate scheme profitability had been removed and questioned how irrigators could assess whether the scheme is financially viable.
 - Sunwater responded that HP customers have a different cost basis than irrigators, which can influence cost allocations.
- Member asked whether expenses could be isolated to better understand whether irrigators are being fairly charged.
 - Sunwater acknowledged that this question had also been raised with the Queensland Competition Authority (QCA).

6. Meeting close

- Meeting closed at 10:30am.
- Next meeting scheduled for Wednesday 19 November.

7. Actions.

Action Item	Action Owner	Status of Action
Sunwater to undertake further modelling based on member feedback	Megan Shea	In progress

8. Approval and review

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