



MEETING MINUTES

Committee Name:	Customer and Community Advisory Group (CCAG)
Venue:	Hybrid meeting In Person: Hunter Water Board Room, 36 Honeysuckle Drive, Newcastle West Online: Via MS Teams
Date and Time:	Wednesday 7 December 2022 9.30am-12noon

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cr Brian Adamthwaite	Lake Macquarie City Council (Chair)
Cr Dr Elizabeth Adamczyk	City of Newcastle
Mr David Beins	
Mayor John Connors	Dungog Shire Council
Ms Linda Bowden	Save the Williams River Coalition
Cr Peter Francis	Port Stephens Council
A/Prof Troy Gaston	University of Newcastle
Mr Bill Lennox	Maitland Masonic Hall
Cr Sally Halliday	Maitland City Council
Ms Jean McGarry	Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhoods Alliance

APOLOGIES

Cr Karen Jackson	Cessnock City Council
Ms Sue Johns	National Seniors Association
Mr Douglas McCloskey & Ms Thea Bray	Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC)
Mr Leroy Wilkinson	
Mr Glenn Lyons	Local Land Services

IN ATTENDANCE

Darren Cleary	Managing Director
David Derkenne	A/Executive Manager Strategy and Engagement
Dr Clare Hogue	Senior Community Engagement Advisor

Colin Hancock	Group Manager Water Resilience
Declan Clausen	Executive Officer (CCAG Secretary)

WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting at 9.30am and noted the apologies.

AGENDA OVERVIEW AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No Conflicts of Interest were declared.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The September 2022 and November 2022 meeting minutes were adopted (moved Ms McGarry, seconded Cr Adamczyk), with an amendment to update the minutes to reflect that Cr Halliday had submitted apologies for the November 2022 meeting.

MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr Darren Cleary presented the Managing Director's report to the CCAG, which included:

- Water storage update: storages are currently full following a very wet period. Forecast predicts the conclusion of La Nina and return to more normal weather patterns over summer.
- Corporate scorecard: Hunter Water has performed well against its targets for the first half of the financial year, however is unlikely to meet Non-Revenue Water target due to large watermain breaks in July 2022. Hunter Water has increased acoustic activity and monitoring to identify leaks and breaks within the network. Water sales are lower than target due to the wet weather conditions, impacting revenue and profit metrics.
- Hunter Water's wastewater education campaign, Respect the Throne, awarded a Banksia Award for behavioural change
- Progress on replacing the vent stack at the Newcastle West 1 Wastewater Pump Station, addressing odour issues for the community
- Availability of Hunter Water's 2022 Annual Report, tabled in Parliament and available on Hunter Water's website
- Hydrogen industry, including the opportunity for the use of recycled water and desalination to support the production of Green Hydrogen in the Hunter
- Reintroduction of developer charges in the Lower Hunter

Members asked questions of how Hunter Water identifies and predicts water main breaks. The Managing Director responded outlining the variables that contribute towards water main breaks, including the age and condition of pipes and soil conditions, and how water main breaks are identified including calls from customers and the community, the use of sensors to identify unusual patterns, acoustic surveying of the water main network.

Members queried leakage and non-revenue water targets, and recycled water volumes and investments, and how these compare to best practice. The Managing Director responded advising that targets are considered ambitious and align with best practice.

Action: It was agreed that Hunter Water would present on the latest National Performance Report benchmarking results in early 2023.

Members questioned the design and location of sewer vent stacks, especially in older suburbs. The Managing Director explained Hunter Water's proactive response to odour issues, and the change in sewer design over the years to reduce odours.

Members queried the water supply for Green Hydrogen. David Derkenne responded referencing the Lower Hunter Water Security Plan, and the adaptive options available including recycled water and desalination.

A copy of the Managing Director's presentation is **attached**.

LOWER HUNTER WATER SECURITY PLAN IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE – INCLUDING BELMONT DESALINATION PLANT AND UPPER HUNTER CONNECTION (GLENNIES CREEK TO LOSTOCK DAMS)

Colin Hancock, Group Manager Water Resilience

In April 2022, the NSW Government released the Lower Hunter Water Security Plan.

Mr Hancock provided an update on the progress of implementing the Lower Hunter Water Security Plan, including works underway to progress the Belmont Desalination Plant and engagement with Water Infrastructure NSW on the proposed Upper Hunter connection with Glennies Creek and Lostock Dams.

Members discussed the proposed Recycled Water Demonstration Plant and favoured a portable demonstration plant (such as the Colorado model). Members queried whether there had been direct engagement with Councils following the adoption of the Plan, how the Belmont Desalination Plant would function (including waste disposal and impacts on potential offshore wind development). Hunter Water advised that a working party has been formed with Councils to discuss water efficiency, including sharing information between organisations on best practice. Brine for the Belmont Desalination Plant is proposed to be returned to the ocean via the existing Wastewater Treatment Works outfall pipe, and it is not anticipated that there would be any impacts with other offshore uses.

Members queried how the Paterson River offtake would function, how engagement was advertised for the Glennies-Lostock information sessions at Tocal and Singleton, and the timing of delivery of the Glennies-Lostock scheme. Hunter Water advised that sessions were well attended and led by Water Infrastructure NSW.

Members sought an update on Hunter Water's paleochannel investigations and were advised that Hunter Water continues to explore whether the paleochannel could provide an additional water storage source. Works were being undertaken to determine that the aquifer is not connected to the Tomago Sandbeds.

Members queried drilling around Grahamstown Dam and were advised that Hunter Water has commenced 15-yearly periodic dam safety investigations.

Members discussed stormwater reuse, including the Hunter Water partnership with the Newcastle Jockey Club and City of Newcastle.

A copy of Mr Hancock's presentation is **attached**.

SEAHAM WEIR POOL EROSION MANAGEMENT PROJECT

Mr Declan Clausen, Executive Officer

Mr Clausen provided a brief update on the Draft Seaham Weir Pool Erosion Management Plan, including the proposed actions to reduce erosion along the Seaham Weir Pool, and indicative outcomes of community engagement.

Members queried catchment management in other parts of the region, including along the Hunter River. Hunter Water responded providing a brief update on the Hunter River Estuary Masterplan project, and Hunter Water's recent catchment improvement project at Paxton.

Members queried the strength of the boating restrictions proposed on the Weir Pool, and the need for these to be enforced. Hunter Water advised that this issue had been repeatedly raised in the public exhibition and would be escalated to Transport for NSW for consideration.

A copy of Mr Clausen's presentation is **attached**.

PRICE PATH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Mr David Derkenne introduced Dr Clare Hogue, who provided an update on Hunter Water's price path community engagement. Dr Hogue thanked CCAG members for participating in the recent focus groups.

Dr Hogue described the process Hunter Water was following to triangulate feedback and understand community views on the various trade-offs. This includes in the areas of hot spots of localised poor service, digital meters, carbon emissions, recycled water, digital experience, stormwater amenity and catchment amenity work.

Members discussed cost of living, hardship and vulnerability resulting from inflation, interest rate increases, and the cost of housing.

Members discussed purified recycled water (PRW) and the work of Professor Khan on recycled water education. Hunter Water advised that the Lower Hunter Water Security Plan outlines Hunter Water's actions to educate and understand community values on recycled water.

Members discussed the phrasing of engagement questions. Dr Hogue advised that wording had been aligned to standard phrasing from Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) to ensure comparability of results.

A copy of Dr Hogue's presentation is **attached**.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE AND GENERAL BUSINESS

Nil questions on notice of items of general business were submitted.

MEETING CLOSE

Meeting closed 11.50am

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Draft minutes to be considered by CCAG at meeting on 28 February 2023.