

Howard Water Advisory Committee

Notes for Meeting 10: Tuesday, 18th July 2017

10am –4pm, DENR Level 1 Conference Room, Goyder Building

Present:, Dave Liddle, Jan Hintze, Mathew Salter, Kate Peake, Maree Bredhauer, Gerry Wood, Mark Smith, Donna Jackson, Raelene Burke (Chair), Daryl Chin (PWC), Chris Seccull (PWC), Mardi Miles (DENR), Simon Cruickshank (DENR).

Apologies: David Ciaravolo, Shane Papworth, Bill Risk

1. Welcome and apologies

2. Notes of previous meeting

Meeting notes from previous meeting accepted

3. HWAC communications

DENR update:

- Advertising was undertaken in June to update groundwater watch and closing date for licence applications for existing users.
- Groundwater watch signs are continually being updated
- The licensing portal went 'live'. This portal contains information relating to granted and advertised water extraction licences.
- Land use mapping project (LUMP) is currently being updated. This was last updated in 2008. This project includes spatial information about land use, irrigated areas and crop types.

Member updates:

Dave Liddle	no update
Maree Bredhauer	no update
Mathew Salter	Clarification sought about education tools used by the department (website, fact sheets, signs)
Kate Peake	Rural Development Australia – attended the Developing the North Australia conference in Cairns, repeating message that water is being wasted by running to the ocean in Nth Australia, and the misperception of the resource availability NT Farmers – developing a water policy. Communication needed for commercial producers who don't have a licence and the implications of not applying. There is a lack of knowledge with English as second language producers, along with a communication breakdown Rural Women's Award – project plan submitted, survey to be undertaken in six months, then do workshops in the second half of next year
Jan Hintze	Comment on competing water users, Power and Water water use and commercial users.
Mark Smith	Education for commercial users required, limited opportunity for expansion.

Gerry Wood

Need to get back to 80/20. There needs to be an expansion of the reticulated network, and incentives to convert to reticulated supply, and alternatives for development that does not rely on bores.

4. Policy Development

The department is working on finalising policies. These include:

- Strategic aboriginal reserve
- Beneficial uses
- Unused water (formally 'use it or lose it')
- First in first served
- Staged allocations
- Trade
- Stock and domestic use

5. Power and Water presentation – Daryl Chin & Chris Seccull

Darwin region water supply strategy – groundwater a critical component of Darwin's supply

- Components of Darwin water supply
 - Darwin River Dam
 - McMinns and Howard East Borefields
 - McMinns storage and transfer facility
 - Manton dam (offline)
- Darwin water consumption
- Level of service objectives
- Water restrictions
- Water source development program
- Living water smart
- Groundwater component

Issues raised:

What is the number of customers in the Howard region, and greater Darwin Rural water control district?

6. Stock and domestic management options

The following options for stock and domestic water use were discussed:

- Use estimates of water use to determine stock and domestic component of consumptive pool.
- Undertake annual water use survey
- Reinstate voluntary bore metering program
- Introduce a program of water restrictions to all users
- Setting maximum pipe size for equipped bores to restrict the volume of water that can be extracted from the HGWS

Recommended position:

That a targeted water use survey is carried out in conjunction with an education program, and that a program of water restrictions is agreed to in principle, with details to be confirmed prior to review of the plan.

Timeline of implementation:

- Targeted water use survey – 1-2 years
- Voluntary bore meter program – 2-3 years
- Support for Water Act review – 3-4 years
- Develop water restrictions program – 5 years

Donna Jackson – As a traditional owner, does not agree that water is the property of the crown, and it has been taken from traditional owners. Considering the socio-economic background of traditional owners feels under duress to make decision about water management. Can't agree with any options.

All members present accepted recommended position, apart from D Jackson who abstained.

7. Security and reliability

The following options for licence security and reliability were discussed:

- All licence holders have the same security level
- Public water supply licences have a higher level of security
- All existing licence holders have the same level of security, and any new allocations be granted at a lower security level, providing there is allocation available
- Security levels are determined by crop type. Ie perennial plantings have a higher security level than annual plantings

Recommended position:

All existing licence holders (and users) have the same level of security, and any new allocations be granted at a lower security level, providing there is allocation available.

All members present accepted recommended position, apart from D Jackson who abstained.

8. Bore Construction permits

In several areas, the potential level of use is now considered to exceed sustainable yield, including the West and Central zones of the Howard groundwater system.

Permits for bore construction permits in these areas will only be granted for replacement bores or rehabilitation. Permits will also be issued for one new stock and domestic bore on each land parcel that was created by approved subdivision (no permits for additional bores).

A land parcel that has connection to reticulated water supply will not be granted a bore construction permit for stock and domestic use.

Recommended Position

That bore construction permits only be issued for replacement bores for commercial users with access to reticulated supply who currently hold a water extraction licence.

All members present accepted recommended position, apart from D Jackson who abstained.

9. Trade and unused water

Options for trading rules discussed:

- Trade cannot occur across management zones
- In zones considered to be over allocated, trading cannot occur for water considered to be unused. Water to be returned to the non-consumptive pool for environmental purposes

Options for unused water (use it or lose it) discussed:

- If the zone is considered to be over allocated, unused water to be returned to the non-consumptive pool
- If the zone is not over allocated, an expression of interest process to be used to reallocate water based on local benefit.
- Staged allocations to be used for new developments

All members present accepted proposed options, apart from D Jackson who abstained.

10. Action plan, timeframe and responsibilities

- Education and Communication – what, how and for whom.
- Licensing follow up – status and feedback to applicants
- Land Use Mapping Project – update when complete
- Alternative water capture – rainwater tank feasibility
- Developing the North – who's doing the advocacy, focus of work being undertaken by CSIRO with Northern Australia Water Resource Assessment (NAWRA)
- Influence of other Government agencies – integrated/shared response around such issues as water use and saving
- Power and Water info – confirmation of customer numbers in plan area and Darwin Rural WCD, capacity of bores and pump rates, future of banjo/spaghetti lines
- Licence and Reliability tables – update and provide different use scenarios (eg 73/30, 60/40 etc)
- Definitions for plan, including security levels
- Environmental exclusion zones
- Water Act review

11. Other business

- Determination of trigger points for restriction program – start conversation now
- Update of information screens and water level signs
- Independent website – is this possible?
- Water for mining use
- SAR Update
- Licensing responsibility – NT Farmers is having input, identify non-users, informing new buyers
- Gaps – environmental flow requirements, importance of sand layer

12. Next Meeting – 29th August