

Oolloo Water Advisory Committee
Meeting Record 3

2 November 2016 – 9.30am
Paterson Room, Katherine Research Station

Members Present

John Childs	Chair
Kate Peake	Regional Development Australia Northern Territory Proxy for Simon Smith
Sam McBean	NT Cattleman's Association representative, Water Extraction Licence Holder
Eddie Webber	Community Member
Trish Rigby	Proxy for Lorrae McArthur Northern Land Council representative
Warren de With	AFANT Representative
Lizzie Sullivan	Proxy for Mona Liddy - Traditional Owner
Dick Perry	Community Member, Water Extraction Licence Holder
Rob Lindsay	Maddaingya Malak Malak Ranger Program Representative
Peter Marks	Horticulturist, Water Extraction Licence holder (present from 11.45am – 2.00pm)

Members Absent

Lorrae McArthur	Trish Rigby present as proxy
Mona Liddy	Lizzie Sullivan present as proxy
Phil Howie	Community Member, Water Extraction Licence holder
Simon Smith	Kate Peak present as proxy
Alison King	Aquatic Ecologist
Malcom Baker	TFS Corporation, Water Extraction Licence Holder

Advisors Present

Gabby Yates	Water Planner, DENR
Dale Cobban	Manager, Water Resources Modelling, DENR

Observers

Pru Ducey	Minutes, DENR
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1. OPENING

(John Childs)

Meeting opened at 9.40am

1.1. Apologies

Lorrae McArthur	Trish Rigby present as proxy
Mona Liddy	Elizabeth Sullivan present as proxy
Phil Howie	Community Member, Water Extraction Licence holder
Simon Smith	Kate Peak present as proxy
Alison King	Aquatic Ecologist
Andrew O'Bree	Proxy for Malcom Baker TFS Corporation, Water Extraction Licence Holder

1.2. Introduction from the Chair

In the previous meetings we have looked at the issues and values that will underpin development of the plan. This meeting we will be starting to look at figures and numbers.

2. MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee agreed the Minutes of Meeting 2 were a true and correct record.

2.1. Action Items from previous meeting

- ❖ *Action Item: Gabby Yates will provide a revised table of groundwater entitlements and reported usage that also includes the beneficial uses and provides a bit more information about the trends in groundwater usage.*

As requested, meeting papers included information on:

- Table summarising the Entitlements and Usage for the Ooloo Dolostone Aquifer for the past 5 water accounting years (2011/12 to YTD 2016/17)
- Charts showing Annual Usage displayed by Security Level
- Graph showing Licence Security Level and Proposed Use (that each licensee planned at the time of their application)
- Table summarising Stock water usage in the Ooloo Aquifer as estimated for planning purposes in 2009.

The intent of the discussion about values at the last meeting was to draw out the values, and relate beneficial uses, and tie them into the higher level benefits and outcomes we are trying to achieve with the plan.

Discussion points and comments included:

- Seek clarification if needed
- Important to note that everyone needs water every year
- What does zero usage mean – it could be that planned development has not yet occurred or that no meter has been installed resulting in no reported pumpage

- As meter installation is a licence condition, it is important the Department follows up to ensure compliance.
- In August 2016, the Department issued letters to licence holders who had underutilised their licence entitlement for 2 consecutive 12 month periods. This advised that if their licenced water entitlement is underutilised for a third consecutive 12 month period, they will be requested to provide a written explanation to the Controller of Water Resources explaining why the Extraction Limits were not reached and to provide a projection of water requirements under the licence for the next three years or the remaining term of the licence, whichever is lesser. The Controller will use this information to make a decision in relation to revoking or amending the licence.
- The Committee has a responsibility to ensure the Plan has mechanisms in place to deal with unused water.
- In the absence of a Plan, water allocation decisions are made in line with the *Water Act*. The Act will always include a right of appeal.
- Concerns relating to the increase in the consumptive pool while reported usage is only 36%

The Committee expressed their appreciation for the time and effort that went into providing the additional information.

❖ *Action Item: John Childs will look into whether the Minister may be able to attend the next meeting.*

It is encouraging that Expressions of Interest are currently being sought for other Water Advisory Committees.

3. PRESENTATION (Dale Cobban) USING WATER RESOURCE MODELLING IN THE DALY RIVER CATCHMENT

Dale Cobban provided a PowerPoint presentation about modelling in the Daly River Catchment, to provide members with a better understanding of how modelling works and how it can be used.

- Models are continual works in progress as more data is gathered and understanding of the natural environment improves
- Combined Groundwater/Surface water (integrated) model of the Daly River Catchment and Daly Basin aquifers (Mike 11 and Feflow)
- Treats the water resources of the Daly River Catchment and Daly Basin aquifers in their entirety as “connected waters”, and ensures the water is not allocated twice
- Examples of comparisons between actual (measured) and modelled data
- The model is regarded as suitable for the purpose of assessing aquifer response at a basin scale

- The model can be used to test scenarios or “what if?” modelling of future possible developments, land clearing and climate change
- Climate change

4. ESTIMATING THE CONSUMPTIVE POOL AND WATER ALLOCATION RELIABILITY (Gabby Yates)

This presentation outlined:

- Terms and Definitions
- Key Policies
- Estimating reliability

Before 2013, Security levels were not specified for Groundwater Extraction Licences for the Ooloo Dolostone Aquifer. Licences that do not have a security level specified are treated as High Security licences. After 2013, security levels were applied to new entitlements granted in the Ooloo Dolostone Aquifer. A round of licence application assessments in 2014 resulted in the granting of further licenced entitlements. If applications were assessed to cause no change in reliability, the water entitlements were issued as high security, if applications were assessed to cause a change in reliability of existing licences, the water entitlements were issued as medium security. In early 2016 another round of licence applications were assessed and entitlements were issued as medium security where there was no change to the reliability of existing licences, and low security if applications were assessed to cause a change in reliability.

In response to a query as to whether the same reliability assessment formula is used elsewhere in Australia, members were advised the methodology has been reviewed twice, firstly by groundwater consultants, Hydrogeologic in its application in the Roper catchment and then by the Goyder Institute in its application in the Daly Catchment.

In relation to licences upstream of Dorisvale Crossing, High Security Entitlements have a reliability of 53% (16 out of 30 years). Members queried how much an allocation might be in years where they would not receive a 100% allocation. There was discussion about the announced allocation method. One member suggested that announced allocations should be assessed not on the total volume of entitlement that could be used but rather on the volume of entitlement that was likely to be used in any year.

Members requested more information about the Sustainable Yield and the Consumptive Pool and how these are derived.

Members requested reliability estimates for a drier 30 year period than the last 30 year period.

What do we do about ‘unused’ water (i.e. it is not surplus if planned for development) and how do we have water entitlements available for future development interests.

ACTION: Gabby Yates to provide members with information on the rules applying to the splitting of licences through land subdivision.

Robbie Henderson, the Water Planner based in Alice Springs is working on a draft policy in relation to Strategic Indigenous Reserves. It is intended that the Ooloo Water Advisory Committee will be asked to provide feedback on the draft policy as part of a broader engagement strategy regarding SIR.

ACTION: Gabby will keep the Committee informed about the development of the SIR policy.

As requested, members received blank copies of Approved Form 14, (Application for Grant or renewal of licence to take or use Groundwater), the supporting information document to be attached to the Application, which includes bore information and the property development plan, and a template of the Licence document.

There is no application fee payable, but the applicant needs to pay for the cost of advertising new and increased water licence applications which is around \$400.

Licence applications require detail to substantiate the request for water entitlement. Licence holders are held to account to meet the terms and conditions of their licence which reflect the development plan included in the licence application.

Many licences have staged annual entitlements that ramp up over time to full development.

5. DISCUSSION: QUANTIFYING THE WATER RESOURCE – key considerations in the Water Allocation Plan

ACTION: Gabby Yates to present a Water Budget, together with information on the Sustainable Yield and the Consumptive Pool at the next meeting.

6. PLANNING OUR WORK – agree on the outputs and timetable

The draft plan of work provided to members will guide the work of the Committee and the supporting activities of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Stage One – Scene setting (Meetings 1 and 2)

Getting a sense of the resource and what has been done in the past.

Stage 2 – Knowledge Development (Meetings 3, 4 and 5)

Members developing a deeper knowledge of issues discussed so as to be in a position to look at options for drafting the Plan. This will be the biggest part of the work the Committee will do together.

Stage 3 – Development of the Plan (Meetings 6, 7 and 8)

Stage 4 – Finalisation of the Plan (Meeting 9)

Stage 5 – Declaration of the Plan (Meeting 10 debrief and reflection)

In response to a question as to whether they will be working from the previous draft Plan, members were advised there is now a template for all Water Allocation Plans in the Territory so they are all set out the same. In that sense the Plan will look different to previous drafts, but some information is still relevant and will probably be incorporated in the new plan if that is the recommendation of the Committee.

ACTION: Gabby Yates to provide members with the previous final working draft developed through DRMAC (draft provided at meeting 2 was the draft that was made available for public comment is not the most recent working draft seen by previous members of DRMAC), as well as a copy of the template for Water Allocation Plans.

Stage 2 activities – let Gabby Yates know if there are other headline topics you wish to discuss. The work plan includes the main topics raised at the first two OWAC meetings.

There was a comment that there are currently groups consulting on native title for beds and banks of the Daly River. Gabby Yates requested NLC to provide information to the Committee about this if they thought it is relevant to the Plan.

A Committee member noted the long program of work monitoring fish and flows in the Daly River and the NESP project that has begun this year to further investigate the environmental water requirements of the Daly River.

John Childs noted that planning started with Erskine 2004 – do we know better now with all the research that has been done? It was suggested that the Committee asks Alison King to provide an update about this.

ACTION: John Childs will follow up on whether there is a review/ summary paper about the findings of 10 years of fish and flows project.

7. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be in January 2017 – Date TBA

Discussion about what the Committee would like to see at the next meeting:

- Discussion about Reserves policy
- Water Budget, Sustainable Yield, Consumptive Pool and further information about water allocation reliabilities
- Update on whether there will be a review of licences issued since mid-2012, when and what are the terms of reference for the review?

The Chair requested members let him know if there are questions they would like raised with the Minister. This is so they can be provided to the Minister beforehand to enable her to be in a position to provide answers should she be available to attend the next meeting of OWAC.

Meeting Closed 2.55pm