

Minutes

Meeting opened 9.30AM

Attendance

PRESENT:

Members

Mr John Huigen (Chair)	Local resident, Huigen Advisory
Greg Owens	NT Farmers
Rod Cramer	Alice Springs resident (Rural Resident's Association)
Jimmy Cocking	Arid Lands Environment Centre
Mr Glenn Marshall	Alice Springs resident (urban water efficiency expert)
Martin Campbell	Central Land Council
Adam Davis	Power and Water Corporation

Observers:

Mr Mervyn Rubuntja	Expert on aboriginal cultural values
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Apologies:

Mr Eli Melki	Alice Springs Town Council
Robyn Grey-Gardner	Alice Springs resident (remote water and water quality expert)
Barbara Shaw	AAPA representative and Traditional Owner

NT Government representatives (Non-members)

Tim Bond	Director, Water Planning and Engagement
Adrian Tomlinson	Water Resource Planner, Water Planning and Engagement

1.0 Acknowledgement to Country - Chair

John Huigen (Chair) acknowledged that the meeting was occurring on Arrernte Country, and acknowledged the existing, present and future Traditional Owners including those present. John noted that the work of the Alice Springs Plan Review Committee (The Committee) was extremely important to Arrernte people and country.

2.0 Opening - Chair

The Chair welcomed attendees, introduced the meeting and confirmed the agenda.

The Chair asked for declarations of interest. Adam Davis, Rod Cramer and Greg Owens declared they held or were responsible for groundwater extraction licence

2.1 Correspondence

Nil

2.2 Business Arising

2.2 Minutes of previous meeting

Confirmed with change to discussion about cultural values.

3.0 Work plan for the day – Adrian Tomlinson

Refer PowerPoint attached.

The committee's eleven recommendations from the previous meeting were presented. The water planner advised they were generally addressed in the review. The final appendix in the technical review describes how and where they are address in the review. The PowerPoint, highlights in red the sections of the review which address the committee's recommendations.

The water planner advised that three of The Committee's recommendations were not fully addressed or alternate strategies proposed in the review. They were:

(1) The life of the finite water resource is not being maximised through demand management. Re-establishing a cap on public water entitlements is recommended.
(7) The plan should provide a decision-making framework to assist the Controller in decision making. It needs to:

- **identify of values and priority weightings**
- **be based on a cost benefit analysis and modelling.**

(9) There are gaps in legislation which limit the Controller's ability to achieve the outcomes of the plan (in particular the relation of mining and petroleum legislation and the Water Act was discussed).

Recommendation (1) was discussed. Tim Bond outlined that establishment of a cap was not seen as something a water allocation plan should do. However, across the Territory, demand management is a Northern Territory Government priority. It has been recognised in the Labor Water Security policy statement, in the Territory Economic Recovery Commission Report and the Minister's statement at the Water in the Bush conference in 2020. The Office of Water Security is still developing the approach so explicit guidance on how it will be delivered cannot be given. The review strongly highlights the need for Territory-wide strategies to give priority to Alice Springs in order to maximise the life of a finite water resource.

The Committee considered the desired outcome of demand management. At one level it is to see investment in water demand approaches, but the purpose is to reduce water use and ultimately to maximise the length of the finite water resource.

Adam Davis noted that for a water utility, a cap could provide incentive to change but it may not be the best way to achieve the desired goals of water use efficiency/water use reduction. Under a cap scenario if the population shrinks or remains stable, no improvement may be required to maintain within the cap. Targets proportional to population (L/person/day or

kL/household/yr) or leakage indices (Non Revenue Water or Infrastructure Leakage Index), may allow for more continuous improvement and long term tracking of relative performance as the size of the town changes. It was also discussed that demand reduction was also needed through all sectors not just domestic.

The committee confirmed the need for effective management of the demand side of water resource management. It replaced its previous recommendation (1) with the following two recommendations.

- 1. Implement mechanisms and stretch targets to achieve a reduction in demand/efficiency/water/use/re-use to extend the life of the resource, including addressing disincentives to efficiency e.g. licensing caps or use it or lose it**
- 2. Formal representation of water advisory committees in the development and implementation of water security policies and in preparation for renewal of the Alice Springs water allocation plan are needed to ensure local and regional variances, issues and concerns are incorporated.**

Recommendation 7 (on the need for a decision-making framework) was briefly discussed. The water planner advised a new decision-making framework was not considered appropriate as this could create ambiguity with the existing framework provided by the Northern Territory Water Allocation Planning Framework and the Alice Springs Water Allocation Plan 2016-2026. The review could however provide additional information and updates to clarify the current framework.

Recommendation 9 (on gaps in legislation) was not discussed.

4.0 Feedback on the review – report structure and introductory sections

Review report - chapter 1. It was discussed that if possible more time series data (earlier than 2016) on breakdown of use by sector would be helpful in the figures. Tim Bond stated that the 2016 to 2020 data was for the period of the plan being reviewed.

Review report - chapter 3. The overall finding “the review finds the Alice Springs Water Allocation Plan 2016-2026 is suitable to remain in force until 16 February 2026” was considered and generally agreed. No objections were raised.

The Committee emphasised that the above overall finding was appropriate due to the need to undertake more work before a new plan that advanced upon the current plan could be produced. However this consideration was based on the expectation that the review’s recommendations to mitigate all the plan’s shortcomings would be implemented in the interim.

5.0 Feedback on review – plan outcomes

The following comments were provided.

Review report chapter 4, Objective 1: Provision of water for public water supply Hydraulic fracturing was discussed. It was raised that in the Katherine Tindall water allocation plan the whole plan area was considered a “no go zone” whilst reserved blocks in the Alice

Springs plan only covered the lots where bore infrastructure were located. Tim Bond highlighted that Katherine situation was different as drinking water and domestic supplies were vulnerable to contamination occurring anywhere in the plan area.

It was discussed that no go zones were needed wherever modelling suggested drinking water supplies were at risk. It was also discussed that differentiation between areas where groundwater could be directly affected and areas where the contamination pathway was via surface waters was needed.

Review report chapter 4, Objective 2: Ensure sustainable development: It was raised that the need for an improved scientific basis for the ESY Wanngardji should have occurred before the review. This was not achieved and still needs to occur.

The cause of over-use in Wanngardji relates to rural stock and domestic use. It was considered that metering of all groundwater use was needed to understand water use and improve the understanding of the water balance. While this could not currently be required by a plan, the Committee added the following to its list of recommendations.

3. All water extraction in the plan area should be metred including RSD will allow for holistic management and track progress in water management.

Review report chapter 4, Objective 4: Cultural water needs: Martin Campbell advised that during consultation with Traditional Owners the importance of the Coolibah Swamp (Ankerre Ankerre) was emphasised. Wherever important sites for management are mentioned this site should be included.

6.0 Feedback on review - compliance with the Water Act

There were no suggested changes to the draft report.

7.0 Feedback on review - water management framework

It was suggested that recreational activities need to be managed to protect environmental values of water resources. It was agreed that the text in the plan outcomes section (chapter 4) would be updated to include this.

The definition of the term "water dependent ecosystems" was queried and it was agreed that this would be included in the glossary.

8.0 Next steps

The water planner to circulate the current version of the report and the technical review as soon as possible to committee members to provide any final comments by COB 9 February 2021.

The report and technical review will be sent to the Acting Executive Director Water Resources by 12 February 2021.

Once the Minister has accepted the report and technical review a copy of both reports will be provided to the committee members.

9.0 Implementation arrangements

The water planner advised that the intention was to prepare an implementation plan describing the responsibility and sequencing of the actions recommended in the review. This would be completed by 30 June 2021.

A water advisory committee is also recommended to be in place for the term of the plan. This would involve advising on implementation of the current plan, including the review, and also advising on preparation of the next plan.

Committee members emphasised that the new committee should be instigated as soon as possible in order to maintain the continuity of the engagement with the stakeholders and provide ongoing and informed community input into the next planning process.

Committees are established via a public expression of interest (EOI) process. Current committee members would be advised of the EOI process.

10.0 Launch of the review and the water forum

The water planner advised that a water forum is recommended in line with committee's recommendation. It was discussed that it would take some time to arrange and do well in a way which include all necessary parties. It was discussed that October could be appropriate. This could be timed to coincide with national water week.

11.0 Feedback from the committee

The committee noted that the short-timeframe for the review was a hindrance. Otherwise the committee was satisfied that the review was comprehensive and would provide good guidance on implementing the plan.

The feedback received suggested committee functioned well and members felt it had provided effective stakeholder engagement. It was mentioned that the approach provided a good example for future engagement processes using a water advisory committee.

The work of Central Land Council and commitment of Traditional Owner observers was commended.

A higher degree of gender equity should (and will be sought) in recommending future committees.

The Committee was satisfied with the amount of information it had received from the department.

The Chair's successful efforts to include members and organise the discussion into effective advice to the Department was recognised.

Meeting Closed: 12.10PM

Twelve major recommendations:

- 1 Implement mechanisms and stretch targets to achieve demand reduction via /efficiency/water use/re-use to extend the life of the resource, including addressing disincentives to efficiency e.g. licensing caps or “use it or lose it”.
- 2 The quality of the drinking water resource is not sufficiently protected.
- 3 The Wannardi Basin and Town Basin environmental values and estimated sustainable yield are not adequately defined and there is concern about over allocation.
- 4 Surface water resources are not effectively managed. (Environmental values that should be protected should not be limited to river gums in the river corridor.)
- 5 There is a lack of integration in management activities to protect water resources across government and community. It requires:
 - a. communicating a meta narrative (i.e. an overarching account or interpretation of events and circumstances, including connection with past plans and strategies)
 - b. a governance structure for these activities
 - c. a governance structure for Aboriginal representation in plan implementation
 - d. a Water Forum.
- 6 A water advisory committee is needed:
 - a. on an ongoing basis
 - b. with no long gaps between meetings.
- 7 The plan should provide a decision-making framework to assist to Controller in decision making. It needs to
 - a. identify of values and priority weightings
 - b. be based on a cost benefit analysis and modelling.
- 8 An overarching “water story” is needed to form the basis of a communication and engagement strategy (including environment, culture and water efficiency and could be in different forms e.g. art).
- 9 There are gaps in legislation which limit the Controller’s ability to achieve the outcomes of the plan (in particular the relation of mining and petroleum legislation and the Water Act was discussed).
- 10 Licence holders do not feel they have sufficient security and certainty about licence conditions (salinity bands in the Amadeus Basin) and their continued access to their entitlements.
- 11 Improved confidence in water availability estimates by incorporating the latest science and updating aquifer models is needed.
- 12 Formal representation of water advisory committees in the development and implementation of water security policies and in preparation for renewal of the plan to ensure local and regional variances, issues and concerns are incorporated.

Department of Environment, Parks and Water
Security

Alice Springs Plan Review Water Advisory Committee Meeting #3

9.45AM- Overview

- Report structure and introductory sections
- Review sections of the review
 - plan outcomes
 - compliance with the Water Act
 - water management framework
- Implementation arrangements
 - Launch of the review and the water forum
- Feedback from the committee

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Required outcomes:

The Committee:

- Understands, gives feedback and endorses the structure of the review report.
- Discusses and gives comments on both the draft Alice Springs Water Allocation Plan 2016-2026 review report and the draft Alice Springs Water Allocation Plan 2016-2026 technical review
- Considers endorsing both the draft Alice Springs Water Allocation Plan 2016-2026 review report and the draft Alice Springs Water Allocation Plan 2016-2026 technical review
- Discusses: the release of the review; its implementation arrangements; and the proposed water forum
- Agrees to give feedback on the review process and discusses how the committee has operated.

Review structure

The review has become two documents

1. The review report

- Fulfils the statutory five yearly review
- Contains guidance needed to maintain the plan's validity.
- Essential recommendations to get ready for plan renewal
- To be the most widely read
- Short.

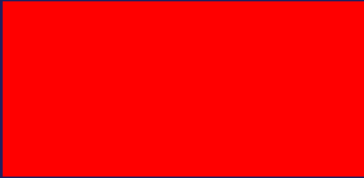


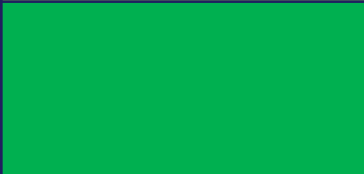
2. Technical review

- Analysis and the discussions behind the review
- Guides how to implement the review recommendations
- Describes the work that needed before plan renewal
- Long.

Parts of the Review

Review component	Review	Technical review	
1. Delivery of plan outcomes	Section 4.1	Chapter 4	
2. Compliance with the Water Act	Section 4.2	Chapter 5	
3. Responsiveness to changing environmental, cultural and economic factors	Section 4.3 onwards	Chapter 6	
4 Recommended revisions	Throughout	Throughout	

Approach to assessing issues

Descriptor	Colour code	Detailed description
Roadblock (4)		Invalidates plan. The plan should be renewed as soon as possible.
Essential response (3)		<p>Mitigations strongly recommended to maintain plan integrity.</p> <p>Response is needed to: address a legal requirement; significantly improve plan implementation; or information is needed before a new plan can be written.</p> <p>Refer Table 6-2 and Table 6-3 in the Technical Review.</p>
Desirable response (2)		Desirable mitigations or actions which are described in the review document.
No response needed (1)		No change needed. Manage by routine policy and procedures.

The Committee's eleven recommendations (where addressed is highlighted in red)	Agenda item
1. Maximise the resource through demand management. Re-establish the cap	
2. Better drinking water quality protection.	
3. Wannardi Basin & Town Basin: protect environmental values, refine ESY, address over allocation.	
4. Surface water resources need better management (ie not just river gums in the river corridor.)	
5. Effective integration across government and community is needed. This requires: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a meta narrative b. A governance structure including a WAC and Aboriginal representation c. a Water Forum. 	
6. A water advisory committee is needed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. on an ongoing basis b. with no long gaps between meetings. 	
7. A decision making framework to assist to Controller that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. identifies values and priority weightings b. is based on a cost benefit analysis and modelling. 	
8. An overarching "water story" to form the basis of a communication and engagement strategy (including environment, culture & water efficiency and could be in different forms e.g. art).	
9. Address gaps in legislation which limit the Controller's ability to achieve the outcomes of the plan (e.g mining and petroleum legislation and the Water Act was discussed).	
10. Licence holders need to have sufficient security and certainty about licence conditions (salinity bands in the Amadeus Basin) and their continued access to their entitlements.	
11. Improved the confidence in water availability by using the latest science and updating aquifer models.	10

plan outcomes

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Plan outcomes

- This relates to output measures on pages 36-39 of the plan

Effect: Did we meet our objectives?

- Refer draft Table 4.1
- The level of achievement of objectives is:
- Maintain public water supply: **Satisfactory**
- Ensure sustainable development: **Satisfactory**
- Protect the environment: **Satisfactory** (*qualified*)
- Recognise Aboriginal culture and other community values: **Unsatisfactory**

Actions: Did we do what we said we would?

- Refer draft Table 4.2 and page 39 in the plan
- The overall level of achievement of plan actions is **Satisfactory**
- *(Of the nine actions that could have been completed by now, seven have been fully achieved and two partly achieved.)*

Compliance with the Water Act

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Compliance with the Water Act

1. The issues where a response is “essential” are highlighted in orange
2. No “roadblocks” identified

Licensing Guidance

Refer table 4.4 in the short review report

This updates the “rules” in Chapter 16 of the current plan

Addresses ASPRWAC recommendations
10 (more certainty for licence holders)

Implementation arrangements

Advisory committees

- An ongoing Water Advisory Committee is recommended for the term of the plan
- This will involve advising on:
 - implementing the current plan and review recommendations
 - preparing the new plan
- Expression of Interest recommended to be called ASAP

Implementation schedule

- A schedule for implementation of the activities described is proposed to be developed by 30 June 2021
- This would identify
 - when actions should occur
 - Who would be involved

**Launch of the review and
the water forum**

Water Forum

- A water forum is proposed in June 21. (We will be stretched to do this by April)
- This can launch the next 5 years
- Present the information gathered during the review
- Start to tell the Water Story
- Invite the Office of Water Security and Power and Water Corporation to participate to cover the demand side

Feedback from the
committee

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Alice Springs Plan Review Water Advisory Committee

Time: 9.15AM Tea and coffee on arrival for 8.30AM to 12.30PM meeting

Date: 4 February 2021

Location: Arid Zone Research Institute, John Hayes building, South Stuart Hwy, Alice Springs

Acknowledgement of Country:

We respectfully acknowledge the past and present Traditional Custodians of this land on which we are meeting, the Arrernte people. It is a privilege to be standing on Arrernte country.

Attendees:

Committee: John Huigen (Chair), Cr Eli Melky, Cr Jimmy Cocking, Mr Rod Cramer, Mr Glenn Marshall, Mr Adam Davis, Mr Greg Owens, Miss Barbara Shaw, Mr Martin Campbell

Observers: TBA

DEPWS: Tim Bond, Adrian Tomlinson, Michelle Foate

Apologies: Ms Robyn Grey-Gardner

Required outcomes:

The Committee:

1. Understands, gives feedback and endorses the structure of the review report.
2. Discusses and gives comments on both the draft Alice Springs Water Allocation Plan 2016-2026 review report and the draft Alice Springs Water Allocation Plan 2016-2026 technical review
3. Considers endorsing both the draft Alice Springs Water Allocation Plan 2016-2026 review report and the draft Alice Springs Water Allocation Plan 2016-2026 technical review
4. Discusses: the release of the review; its implementation arrangements; and the proposed water forum
5. Agrees to give feedback on the review process and discusses how the committee has operated.

AGENDA

	Time	Item	Who	Notes
1.	9.30	Acknowledgement of Country		
2.	9.35	Opening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declarations of interest • Correspondence • Business arising 	Chair	<i>Including apologies and introducing observers and guests</i>
3.	9.45	Overview of the day's workplan	Adrian Tomlinson	
4.	9.50	Feedback on the review – report structure and introductory sections	Tim Bond	<i>Refer Chapters 1-3 of both the review report and technical review</i>
5.	10.05	Feedback on review – plan outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview • Discussion 	Adrian Tomlinson	<i>Refer Chapter 4 of the review report and Chapter 4 of the technical review</i>
6.	10:25	Feedback on review - compliance with the Water Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main conclusions • Discussion 	Adrian Tomlinson	<i>Refer Chapter 5 of the review report and Chapter 5 of the technical review</i>
	10.45	Morning Tea		
7.	11.00	Feedback on review - water management framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main conclusions • Discussion 	Adrian Tomlinson	<i>Refer Chapter 6 of the review report and Chapter 6 of the technical review</i>
8.	11.20	Implementation arrangements Introduction then discussion	Adrian Tomlinson	<i>Refer Chapter 7 of the Review report</i>
9.	11.30	Launch of the review and the water forum Introduction then discussion	All	<i>Presentation</i>
10.	11.50	Feedback from the committee Discussion and evaluation	Chair	<i>Discussion – questionnaire provided at meeting</i>
11.	12.05	Close	Chair	