

Minutes

Meeting opened 5.30 pm

1. ATTENDANCE:

PRESENT:

Members

Dr Jocelyn Davies (Chair)	CDU University Fellow/ geographer
Ms Robyn Grey-Gardner	Alice Springs resident (remote water & water quality expert)
Mr Richie Hayes	Agriculture/Horticulture representative
Mr Eli Melki	Alice Springs Town Council
Ms Veronica Lynch	Indigenous / AAPA representative
Mr Adam Davis	Power & Water Corporation
Mr Rod Cramer	Rural residents association
Mr Glenn Marshall	Alice Springs resident (urban water efficiency expert)
Mr Jimmy Cocking	Arid Lands Environment Centre

NT Government representatives (Non-members)

Mr Robbie Henderson	Water Planner (DENR)
Mr Peter Somerville	Manager Planning & Development (DIPL)

Observers

Mr Alex Read	Arid Lands Environment Centre
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APOLOGIES:

Ms Wendy Stuart	Central Land Council
Ms Sarah Fairhead	Director Southern Region (DENR)

STATUS OF EXISTING ACTION ITEMS

1.1	<i>Edit water policy & planning presentation (make it suitable for general community), and place it on the website</i>	Robbie Henderson	Completed
1.2	<i>Update TOR & circulate. TOR deemed to be accepted by members if no response within 1 week. (Note feedback must CC' all)</i>	Robbie Henderson & All members	Circulated and updated - completed
1.3	<i>Seek Controller of Water / Minister's mandate for ASWAC TOR</i>	Robbie Henderson	Approved by Executive Director, sent to Minister
1.4	<i>Invite DIPL ex-officio member to join ASWAC</i>	Robbie Henderson	Completed
1.5	<i>Report back with further information regarding community education / water efficiency plans (if any).</i>	Robbie Henderson	Completed (no plans from DENR)
1.6	<i>Draft ASWAC response to SIR policy consultations (from meeting notes) & circulate. (Note: feedback must CC' all)</i>	Robbie Henderson & All members	Completed

NEW ACTION ITEMS

1.1	<p><i>(a) Correspond with new potential members from the people and organisations identified (see item 2 in minutes) to scope interest.</i></p> <p><i>(b) Members to report back to ASWAC (through Robbie or Jocelyn) if aware of potential additional Indigenous members or any other potential members not already mentioned.</i></p>	Robbie Henderson All members	Pending
1.2	<i>Organise future ASWAC session focused on demand management.</i>	Robbie Henderson	Pending
1.3	<i>Make a deputation to ASTC (bi-annually) to provide an update on ASWAC / water related matters</i>	Jocelyn Davies (Chair) with support of DENR / members	Pending

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No.	Resolution
3.1	<i>ASWAC encourages DENR Water Resources Division to commit permanent resources into demand management in Alice Springs</i>
3.2	<i>ASWAC notes the Ooraminna licence, but does not support amending the Alice Springs Water Allocation Plan to account for the over-allocation to industry that has occurred in granting the licence.</i>
3.3	<i>Members request ASWAC be engaged to provide advice, in advance, on all future licence applications that represent a deviation from the water allocation plan.</i>

3.1 Denotes ASWAC meeting #3, resolution 1.

1. WELCOME AND OPENING MATTERS

Declaration of any conflicts of interest re matters on agenda: Nil declared at meeting opening, however refer item 4. (below) re specific matters.

Timekeeper: Jimmy Cocking

Motion to confirm minutes of Meeting #2: moved by Jimmy Cocking, Seconded by Rod Cramer; passed unanimously.

Update on actions from previous meeting(s): See table above

Introductions: Robyn-Grey Gardener (attending her first meeting as a member) and Peter Somerville (attending his first meeting as an NTG rep / non-member) briefly introduced themselves.

2. MEMBER RESIGNATION & RECRUITMENT of NEW MEMBER/S

Steven O'Burtill's resignation was noted. (Steve will receive a thankyou letter from the Minister).

It was noted that ASWAC can play a role in recommending potential new members, however members are appointed by the Minister. It was generally agreed that ASWAC would seek new member/s who could make a positive contribution, while ensuring a good

coverage of Alice Springs diversity and stakeholder interests. The following suggestions were received:

- New manager of the golf course (significant user of non-potable town basin water)
- Representative of the 'water industry:' E.g. Taps, Tubs & Tiles, Think Water, or Reece Plumbing
- Chamber of Commerce
- Real Estate Institute of the Northern Territory (REINT)
- Increased Indigenous representation

ACTIONS:

Robbie Henderson: correspond with potential members from the organisations (above) to scope interest.

All members: Report back to ASWAC (through Robbie or Jocelyn) if you become aware of potential additional Indigenous members or any other potential members not already mentioned.

3. UPDATE ON DENR MATTERS OF INTEREST

Robbie Henderson provided updates on current work being progressed by DENR water resources division Territory wide;

- Significant amount of water policy reform work is underway, including key policies unused water ('use it or lose it') and water trading. A number of water licencing systems and procedures are also being updated or developed. Overall DENR Water Resources Division (WRD) is focused on improving policies and procedures, and increasing our capabilities to achieve this.
- Anticipate the findings of the Water Licensing review to be handed down in the next 1-2 months, but note that the review was handled by Department of the Chief Minister and undertaken by external independent reviewers.
- Various staffing changes have occurred within Water Resources Division:
 - Abbe Damrow is the New Director of Licensing and Regulation (new position)
 - Sarah Fairhead is the new acting Director Water Planning & Engagement (new position)
 - Ian Smith has moved out of policy and planning and is working on changes to the Water Act (e.g. to include Mining)
 - There is also a new policy position within the licencing and regulation section

3. PRESENTATION – ALICE SPRINGS POTABLE WATER USE

Adam Davis (PAWC) delivered a presentation on PowerPoint focusing on [water production / use trends](#).

Key information included:

- Annual trend line for water production shows that water production in 2017 is similar to 1980 (around 8,000 ML/yr), having reduced from a peak of over 12,000 ML/yr in 1992.
- There is a strong relationship between water production (use) and rainfall, evident on various scales. Water use declines during wetter years, months or weeks. This is because a significant proportion of water use is outdoors (e.g. garden watering).
- Although the trend line is positive (no growth in water production), most change in production can be explained by the relationship to rainfall and population change. The impact of demand management programs (e.g. [Alice Water Smart](#)) is difficult to differentiate from other variables.
- Alice Springs water production (per capita) remains extremely high relative to similar sized towns elsewhere in Australia. Furthermore Alice Springs water production creates among the highest volume of CO² emissions per KL. While the high water use may be largely explained by climate, Alice Springs also has much higher per capita use than other arid zone towns such as Kalgoorlie in WA. Adam suggested members refer to the [Urban Water Utilities National Performance Report 2015 - 2016](#) to compare Alice Springs water

production with other towns. The report covers 182 performance indicators from 86 water utilities and councils and includes analysis of the effects of climate on water use.

Questions & Discussion:

- Which agency is responsible for education (and demand management programs)?
Robbie reported that DENR does not have a focus on urban water demand management or any plans to undertake demand management programs at present. PAWC (Adam) reported that PAWC was establishing a demand management position in Alice Springs, in recognition that there was a gap. Eli Melki suggested that ASTC could investigate opportunities to increase their involvement in water efficiency programs.
- How does water efficiency such as the relationship with housing density factor into planning considerations? Peter Somerville reported that water efficiency is not directly considered in the planning scheme.
- Building regulations and controls impacts on water use – water efficiency measures are already included (e.g. dual flush toilets), however could possibly be strengthened.
- Members suggested that Power & Water may not be the best agency to lead demand management programs, because PAWC have a business imperative to sell water (for profit) and this potentially conflicts with the aim of reducing consumption. However it was noted that PAWC do undertake demand management (e.g. water smart in the Darwin area), which is driven by the economic incentive to avoid or defer infrastructure spending. However this is less of a factor in Alice Springs in the near term.
- It could be useful to understand what factors explain water demand in other Australian arid towns being lower than Alice.
- Eli Melki recommended that the ASWAC Chair provide a deputation (10 minutes) to Alice Springs Town Council bi-annually provide an update on ASWAC / water related matters. Jocelyn said she would be happy to do this, but would seek support of other members or DENR. This was supported by members.

ACTIONS:

Members request a future ASWAC session focused on demand management. This could potentially include a presentation on outcomes from Alice Water Smart.

Chair (with support from DENR and other members) to make a deputation to ASTC (bi-annually) to provide an update on ASWAC / water related matters.

RESOLUTION:

Advice to DENR (raised by Glenn Marshall): ASWAC encourages DENR Water Resources Division to commit permanent resources into demand management in Alice Springs. Resolution passed unanimously.

4. MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION: Proposals for allocations that would not be compliant with the Water Allocation Plan

Robbie Henderson (DENR) provided information regarding a ground water extraction licence granted to Ooraminna Station in July 2016 for 37.5 ML/yr under the beneficial use 'Industry' (Mereenie / Rocky Hill management zone).

- The licence exceeds the ASWAP allocation within this zone to Industry (5 ML/yr)
- The overall allocation to consumptive beneficial uses has not been exceeded
- In the Statement of Decision (SOD) the Controller of Water Resources stated that "the Plan will be amended at the earliest opportunity, in consultation with the Alice Springs Water Advisory Committee, to provide an allocation of 37.5 ML/yr to Industry, with a concurrent reduction in the allocation for agriculture by 32.5 ML/yr to 3562 ML/yr."

- Peter Somerville (DIPL) provided background information that is on the public record about the proposed Ooraminna sub-division to provide context to the discussion.
- Eli Melki became aware of and declared a potential conflict of interest and left the meeting prior to detailed discussion of the agenda item. Richie Hayes stated he had no conflict of interest because he does not stand to gain from the proposal in spite of being related to proponent. It was also noted that nothing was disclosed to ASWAC that was not already on the public record.

Discussion:

- ASWAC members registered disappointment at the presumption that ASWAC would 'rubber stamp' a decision retrospectively (in the context that ASWAC was not formed when the decision was made and could not be consulted).
- The Plan could have been designed to be more flexible in allocating water between consumptive beneficial uses of industry and agriculture. The Plan may be too rigid.
- Categories (i.e. beneficial uses) for allocations are less important than assessing licence applications against value based criteria, including ESD principles (JD).
- Mining will be included under the Water Act in the future, in this context allocations to industry become more important considerations and may require WAPs to be revisited (JC).

RESOLUTIONS:

Advice to DENR:

ASWAC notes the Ooraminna licence, but does not support amending the Alice Springs Water Allocation Plan to account for the over-allocation to industry that has occurred in granting the licence.

Members request ASWAC be engaged to provide advice, in advance, on all future licence applications that represent a deviation from the water allocation plan.

5. SECTION 17: ASWAP IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

There was insufficient time to present the implementation plan of the ASWAP. Robbie Henderson (DENR) tabled a brief [implementation plan update report](#).

Discussion of the reported is deferred to a future meeting.

6. CLOSING MATTERS

- Robbie Henderson (DENR) proposed speeding up the process of making minutes publically available on the NTG ASWAC web-page. It was agreed that Robbie will draft the minutes for Jocelyn Davies (Chair) to approve and circulate. Members will be provided with one week to comment or seek changes before minutes are uploaded onto the internet. The minutes will still be considered draft until passed at the next meeting, but the online version will only be replaced if changes are made.

The Chair invited members to suggest items for the forward agenda, the following were suggested:

- Demand management (suggestion from members)
- Update on Mereenie aquifer study from DENR senior hydrologist (suggestion from DENR)

6. NEXT MEETING

Tentatively scheduled for 25th October 2017

Meeting closed at 8.00 pm