

Coastal-Hunter Customer Advisory Group

Minutes of Meeting

Location: Tocal Agricultural College, Tocal
Date: 22 April 2026
Time: 9.30am

Present: Shane Gee (Chair), Julia Wokes, David Williams, Chris Rooney, Alan Andrews, Geoff Seccombe, Ken Bray, Andrea Molteno, Wayne Clarke (online), Peter George, Jenny Zadro (online), Melissa Balas (online), Lewis Weber (observer), Anthea Desmond (observer).

WaterNSW: Rob O'Neill, Brendan Maher, Mahmood Khan, Vincent Young, Michelle Yeaman, Amanda Fuller, Lachlan Browne, Teegan Hayward and Toni Hayes. Online for specific agenda items: Phil Glastonbury, Jonathan Belej, Kate Masters, David Wood, Ben Coffey.

NSW DCCEEW: David Anderson and Connor Hall.

Meeting Opened: 9.30am

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

1.1 Acknowledgement of Country

1.2 Apologies: Phillip Rudd, Paul Saad.

1.3 Confirmation of Agenda Items

1.4 Declaration of Interest(s)

- Declarations of interest were sought from attendees in relation to the meeting's agenda items. No interests were declared. Items included in the agenda are not considered confidential unless declared as such.

1.5 Minutes of Coastal-Hunter CAG Meeting, 17 September 2025

- Resolved the minutes of the meeting held on [17 September 2025](#) be confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting. Taken as read.

S Gee/A Andrews (carried)

1.6 Actions arising from minutes

- Refer to action sheet (attached).
- Discussion occurred around recruitment and lack of progress of the Hunter EWAG. Refer to action sheet for update.

2. WaterNSW update:

2.1 WaterNSW update and Land & Water Operations overview (R O'Neill)

- WaterNSW provided an update on its new operating model and status of the business transformation program. The labour reduction process has concluded with approximately 280 FTE roles removed, primarily affecting metropolitan areas, senior and middle management, and corporate functions.
- The Land and Water Operations portfolio structure was outlined, with priorities including improving end-to-end collaboration and process improvements, strengthening consistency in customer engagement, maintaining service levels despite resourcing changes, embedding teams and supporting team morale.
- Top of mind items for the Coastal-Hunter CAG for our team were discussed, including IPART's draft rural valleys pricing decision, metering compliance and Hunter and Paterson WSP remake (NSW DCCEEW).

- Members commented communication with WaterNSW has been good in relation to water planning and delivery and any changes and contact with Council regarding TWRRP has been very good.
- Members noted that customer-initiated alerts and subscriptions within WaterInsights have a fixed end date, requiring customers to resubscribe to continue receiving updates. Many customers are unaware of this therefore missing important information. There is also no notification to customers indicating their subscription has lapsed. Members indicated a preference for customers to subscribe once and opt out if they no longer wish to receive updates. Refer to agenda item 5.1 for further discussion.
- Members requested information be communicated more widely to customers in relation to classification of work approvals rather than just a targeted approach in some valleys. Request noted.

3. Customer Services:

3.1 Water Accounting & Metering (L Browne)

- WaterNSW provided an overview of iWAS, highlighting its key functions, including how customers can manage their water accounts, view meter data, and enter meter reads. An outline of the Data Acquisition Service (DAS) dashboard and its reporting capabilities was also provided.
- [iWAS](#) is WaterNSW's online water accounting platform, giving regulated, unregulated and groundwater customers easy, anytime access to their water accounts. Customers are encouraged to sign up to iWAS if not already on it. iWAS provides accurate and up to date information and allows customers to enter meter reads and keep track of their water account. A range of instructional videos and user guides is available on the WaterNSW website.
- The [DAS](#) provides customers with real-time visibility of their water usage. It allows users to view meter reads in hourly increments, monitor telemetry battery health, view alarms, and export their own data. As a result of customer feedback, the DAS is now accessible directly through iWAS.
- To create a DAS account, please reach out to customer.helpdesk@waternsw.com.au for assistance in setting up your account.
- Customers can [book a 1:1 meeting with WaterNSW](#) to discuss their metering requirements. Meetings are also available for approvals and licensing, approval extensions, BLR enquiries and flood work approvals.
- WaterNSW has consulted widely with Hawkesbury-Nepean customers, user groups, and industry across the catchment in relation to government-owned meters. Feedback has been collated to identify shared priorities and is being used to develop practical pathways, aligned with regulatory requirements and government direction. These pathways will be presented to government for consideration, and customers will be kept informed as decisions and delivery progress. Customers with government-owned meters will be contacted before rollout, and support is available via phone (1300 662 077) or email (portal.maintenance@waternsw.com.au).

3.2 Customer Assessments & Approvals (A Fuller)

- WaterNSW provided an overview of agency roles within the water sector, customer service standards (actual vs target) for applications and approvals, a proposal to change the end-of-year final submission date for temporary trades, and consultation on a proposal to discontinue the third-party consent process for temporary groundwater trades.
- WaterNSW continues to meet or exceed customer service standards for applications and approvals in most areas, with performance standards monitored monthly.
- WaterNSW, in collaboration with NSW DCCEE, has reviewed our end of year water operations and concluded that an earlier submission cut-off date for temporary trade applications is necessary. Moving forward, the last day to submit temporary trade applications for the current water year will be 10 business days before the end of the water year (refer to [fact sheet](#) for more information). Members were also reminded that the customer service standard for temporary trades is 90% processed within 5 business days.

Action CVH2604.01: WaterNSW to provide temporary trade numbers for the coastal valleys.

Responsibility: A Fuller

- WaterNSW is aware of some usability issues raised by customers in relation to the customer portal. The portal is an ongoing program of work and WaterNSW is working to improve the platform. Any feedback or suggestions are welcome.
- In time, iWAS will be integrated into the customer portal however the timeframe will be dependent on funding. If this is a high priority for customers, please let us know as this falls under the WAMC determination and requires the 3 agencies to agree on priorities.

4. OPERATIONS:

4.1 Water Planning & Delivery (M Khan/D Wood)

- WaterNSW presented a review of operations in the Hunter and Coastal valleys, including recent rainfall and outlook, current storage status, dam operations, water allocations summary, water usage and balance, recent flows and orders vs usage. An overview of the water resource monitoring dashboard was also presented and discussed.
- Discussion occurred around flood levels at Glenbawn Dam, with customers stating there was no opportunity to use carryover this year. Customers were advised to raise this with the department in this afternoon's session as part of consultation around the Water Sharing Plan remake.
- Members stated that water quality out of Lostock Dam has been poor since the large inflow last year (flood) and questioned if there was any reason for this. WaterNSW is not aware of any issues however will follow up with the Water Quality team.

Action CVH2604.02: WaterNSW to follow up customer queries around poor water quality at Lostock Dam.

Responsibility: T Hayes

- Discussion occurred around recent flows in the Hunter, with flows dropping below the minimum flow threshold for a few days due to water orders being placed after water was released. This creates issues if there is not enough water in the system and highlights the need to introduce water order lead days.
- Water order lead days refers to the number of days between placing a water order and when the water is delivered or becomes available at the extraction point (ie it is the advance notice period required for operators to release and route water through the river system, so it arrives on time).
- WaterNSW will organise customer education sessions with a view to implementing water order lead days next season. Members supported the proposal and highlighted the importance of education, noting many customers are unaware of their responsibilities, particularly those new to the area. NSW Irrigators' Council offered to work with WaterNSW on customer education.
- An overview of the spill reduction rules in the Hunter was presented and discussed.
- The Hunter valley is currently in 'normal conditions' but moving into 'dry conditions' under the Drought Flood Risk Index (DFRI). Members stated the data presented is not what is reflected on the ground and suggested WaterNSW use a 10-year cycle which would better reflect when dry conditions start. The Paterson is in 'very dry conditions', while the Richmond is in 'normal conditions'. The Bega valley is operating under 'dry conditions'.
- Up to date operational information is available on [WaterInsights](#).

4.2 Regional Operations (M Yeaman)

- Jerome Douziech has been appointed the new Executive General Manager of Built Infrastructure and commenced on 2 February 2026. He is planning to attend the next round of CAGs.
- A summary of current projects in the Hunter and coastal valleys was provided, including refurbishment of hollow jet valves at Glenbawn Dam, communications and electrical replacement at Lostock Dam, road renewals and new downstream gauge at Brogo Dam.

- An overview of Glennies Creek flood recovery works was presented. Final design is expected early May with environmental assessments, specifications and tender documents progressing.
- An overview of Eden Creek Weir removal was provided. WaterNSW continues to engage with residents and stakeholders and has engaged University of NSW to undertake platypus assessment, while NSW Fisheries is undertaking a broader fish survey. Following completion of environmental assessments, WaterNSW and NSW Fisheries will review next steps. Work is not expected to commence before early 2027.
- Discussion occurred regarding IPART's requirement for asset condition assessment data for WaterNSW assets. Members expressed interest in gaining greater visibility over the cost of maintaining and operating assets, including cost to customers. WaterNSW advised that a priority project list was presented at the last meeting following IPART's one-year determination, which indicated projects required to be deferred. WaterNSW may be able to provide an update once IPART releases its final determination.

4.3 Finance update (B Maher)

- As part of its submission to IPART, WaterNSW committed to providing clearer visibility to customers on WaterNSW's financial performance and transparency of charges, including at a valley level.
- WaterNSW proposes to share an updated view at the next CAG meeting of performance relative to revenue, as previously shared with CAGs during the pricing engagement, using the most current financial information, to support transparency and ongoing engagement (examples provided and feedback sought). This will include detail at a valley level.
- The discussion is intended to provide broader context on how economic conditions and management decisions are influencing financial outcomes, rather than focusing solely on short-term performance alone.
- WaterNSW is also keen to hear customer perspectives on the importance of long-term financial sustainability and how this should inform future planning.
- Members stated the CAG is a great forum to have these conversations.

5. Presentations/Consultation:

5.1 WaterNSW WaterInsights app (P Glastonbury)

- WaterNSW has released its new WaterInsights app, available for Android users in the Google store (Apple to come). The app was tested by ~50 users, including some CAG members, and has the same functionality as the previous Water Live app. It is the fastest platform for real-time data.
- An overview of the key features was presented and discussed. The app is built from the website, and data for most sites is produced every 15 minutes.
- The WaterLive App will eventually be retired, scheduled for late 2026, once customers have had an opportunity to download and adopt the new WaterInsights App.
- The Real Time Data (RTD) website and the WaterInsights online portal will continue to operate as they do today, providing reliable access to water data and information.
- The daily river report in RTD is available on the WaterInsights website (almost identical) and WaterNSW is looking to incorporate into the app. It can be viewed as a table, list or system view.
- Discussion occurred around subscription to alerts, as discussed at agenda item 2.1. WaterNSW advised that subscriptions are currently limited to a 12 month period to ensure compliance with the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) requirements. The ability to unsubscribe is included in the WaterInsights roadmap and WaterNSW noted this can potentially be brought forward if customers are supportive of it. Members indicated a preference for an opt out model rather than the requirement for ongoing opt in.
- WaterNSW encourages everyone to use the app and provide feedback via a direct feedback loop in the app. This is the first iteration, so we are keen to hear from customers on what is useful and what isn't.
- Members were very appreciative of app availability as accessing the information on computer is more difficult.

6. BUSINESS PAPERS (taken as read):

- Taken as read.

7. GENERAL BUSINESS:

7.1 CAG Survey Results (B Maher)

- The CAG survey at the end of the last round provided positive results, with ~50 members responding:
 - separating WaterNSW and NSW DCCEEW agenda items was valuable, with positive feedback received;
 - presenting online is suitable for short presentations (up to 20 minutes) however in person presentations are valued by customers where possible and provide better outcomes, understanding and discussion;
 - discussion of proposed policy and current policy are vital for both users and implementors;
 - it is important for NSW DCCEEW to host an afternoon session and that should continue; the separation will help clarify the roles of WaterNSW and NSW DCCEEW.
- WaterNSW reiterated that additional online CAG meetings are available to members at any time throughout the year as required, provided 50% of members agree.

7.2 Hunter River fish kill event (K Bray)

- It was acknowledged communication was managed by the EPA however members stated a multi-agency approach to these types of events should be implemented for the future.
- Members stated the EPA advised customers they could still use water however there was no information on toxicity or contamination in the water, or the source. There were no guidelines for downstream water users on whether they could extract water and weeks later there is still no outcome. Customers believe they are extracting safely, however have no information on contamination.
- Members requested WaterNSW pass on this feedback on behalf of customers.

Action CVH2604.03: WaterNSW to pass on customer feedback to EPA and other relevant agencies in relation to communication around the Hunter River fish kill event.

Responsibility: R O'Neill

Meeting review and close:

Next meeting: 26 August 2026, Tocal

Meeting closed: 12.00pm

Coastal-Hunter Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 22 April 2026

New actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
CVH2604.01	WaterNSW to provide temporary trade numbers for the coastal valleys.	A Fuller	Complete. Refer to attached.
CVH2604.02	WaterNSW to follow up customer queries around poor water quality at Lostock Dam.	T Hayes	WaterNSW undertakes algal monitoring at Lostock Dam for recreational use, of which algal levels are low (green status). This is conducted under the Regional Algal Coordinating Committee. No other water quality sampling is done by WaterNSW at Lostock Dam. Typically, suspended solids and turbidity settle relatively quickly post flood/inflows, however other parameters such as organics can naturally take time to decay and decrease post inflow. The recreational algal status for Lostock Dam is available on WaterInsights - WaterNSW. WaterInsights is an interactive online tool that provides comprehensive information about water management in NSW.
CVH2604.03	WaterNSW to pass on customer feedback to EPA and other relevant agencies in relation to communication around the Hunter River fish kill event.	R O'Neill	In progress.

Carried forward actions

Action number	Action	Person responsible	Status
CVH2509.03	WaterNSW to contact NSW DCCEEW (CPHR Group) and provide members with an update on the Hunter-Paterson EWAG.	T Hayes	Discussion 22/4/26: NSW DCCEEW (CPHR) advised that recruitment is yet to be done, however members stated they have had interviews and went through an involved recruitment process (per above). Update 20/5/26: CPHR Group (NSW DCCEEW) has advised that the process for establishing an EWAG in the Hunter is on hold and will likely remain on hold for the rest of this year. Those who have been interviewed will be contacted. Enquiries can be directed to julie-anne.harty@dcceew.nsw.gov.au

Coastal-Hunter Customer Advisory Group – Actions – 22 April 2026

Action CVH2604.01:

