



## Hunter River Salinity Trading Scheme Operations Committee – Meeting Minutes

<b>Meeting:</b>	HRSTS Operations Committee	<b>Date:</b>	Friday 19 May 2023
<b>Location:</b>	Singleton Library and Online	<b>Time:</b>	10:10am – 12:40pm
<b>Last Meeting Date:</b>	18 November 2022	<b>Next Meeting Date:</b>	10 November 2023
<b>Present:</b>	<p>Dr WEJ Paradise – Chair</p> <p>Lisa Richards – Discharge Licence Holder – BHP – Mt Arthur Coal (online)</p> <p>Craig White – Discharge Licence Holder – Bengalla</p> <p>Gary Mulhearn – Discharge Licence Holder – Yancoal MTW</p> <p>Christopher Rooney – Discharge Licence Holder – AGL Macquarie</p> <p>Robyn Parker – River Management Committee – Local Land Services (online)</p> <p>Ken Bray – Irrigators Representative – Hunter Valley Water Users Association</p> <p>Sally Hunt – Senior Water Planner – NSW Department of Planning and Environment – Water Group (delegate for Danielle Dougherty)</p> <p>Ajantha Prathab – Water NSW</p> <p>Partha Saha – Water NSW</p> <p>Ben Mulhearn – Water NSW</p> <p>Audrey Yim – EPA</p> <p>Amy McLaughlin – EPA</p> <p>David Posniak – EPA</p> <p>Karen Gallagher – EPA</p> <p>Jacqueline Roberts – EPA (delegate for Katrina Van Lint) (online)</p>		
<b>Apologies:</b>	<p>Danielle Doughty, Manager Coastal Waters – NSW Department of Planning and Environment – Water Group</p> <p>Thava Palanisami – Community Representative</p> <p>Alex Young – Director Container Deposit Scheme – EPA</p> <p>Katrina Van Lint – EPA</p>		
<b>Guests:</b>			

Agenda Item	Main Discussion Points	Actions
1. Welcome, Acknowledgement of Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Committee and attendees acknowledged the traditional owners of the lands on which all attendees (in person and online) attended the meeting.</li> </ul>	
2. Declarations of Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No declarations of interest were announced.</li> </ul>	
3. New Attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jacqueline Roberts – EPA Regulatory Policy – attending as an observer only.</li> <li>Karen Gallagher – EPA Regulatory Operations – attending as an observer only.</li> </ul>	
4. Previous Meeting Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Previous meeting minutes were circulated and edited in December 2022/January 2023 and accepted as true and accurate at 19 May 2023.</li> </ul>	

<p>1. Outstanding Actions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mr Craig White has listed issues relating to the current modelling approach in the New Hope Group annual review which is now available on their website.</li> </ul> <p>EPA and Water NSW discussed the potential to notify participants where scheduled releases from Glenbawn Dam may provide discharge opportunities. Members raised concerns about the definition of “scheduled releases” and noted that while releases from the flood mitigation zone should be considered, those from ECA and spillage should not be considered. Members also raised concerns about the salinity of water being released. WaterNSW to work with Committee Members to address these questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flows from Muswellbrook affect Glenbawn Dam flows and salinity. If information from Glenbawn is provided in the annual report, we need to factor in other impacts to ensure that we are not misleading the public and scheme participants. EPA confirmed they will work with Water NSW to confirm messaging and interpretation of data for annual report.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water NSW and EPA to discuss about the issue of carry-over spills and the notification of participants on Glenbawn Dam releases.</li> <li>Explanation at next meeting of the approach on notifying participants of Glenbawn Dam releases. Information to be circulated to Committee members prior.</li> <li>EPA to incorporate Glenbawn Dam release data into the HRSTS Annual Report procedure where appropriate.</li> </ol>
<p>6. Water NSW – Telemetry</p>	<p>Rainfall conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observed rainfall.</li> <li>Last register 19 December 2022, average to below rainfall.</li> <li>Salinity steadily increasing in last six months with flow dropping.</li> </ul> <p>Sandy Hollow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>November 2022 Sandy Hollow EC spike caused by a sensor issue at site. Sensor was covered by silt and sand during a high rainfall event.</li> <li>Fixed in early 2023 when access to the site was possible.</li> <li>Not an actual salinity spike.</li> <li>Water NSW apologised for not providing more timely communication of the issue.</li> <li>Upper sector has shallower depth of the river than lower sector.</li> <li>Hydrometrics can now re-correlate top end and bottom end of events.</li> </ul> <p>Telemetry issues and updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There were nine telemetry issues in the last six months. Two are still to be resolved.</li> <li>Generally, these issues are to do with systems going offline or power is down.</li> <li>Modems need to be upgraded to 5G as 3G is closing end of June 2024.</li> <li>Mr Chris Rooney raised AGL unaware modem had failed at discharge point.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EPA and Water NSW to discuss approach to manage the modem upgrades from 3G to 4/5G network</li> </ol>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dartbrook evolving from legacy to 4G/5G. Mount Pleasant also using 4G/5G Modem.</li> <li>• All participants are to upgrade modems. Members questioned whether they would be notified via letter or email.</li> <li>• Minimum flow required for telemetry to register is 2 or 5 ML.</li> </ul>	
<p>7. Water NSW – River Registers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nine scenarios with mock messages presented. Water NSW presented on two of these (scenarios 3 and 8) as examples to highlight how they would be approached.</li> <li>• Self-registration for early warning network (EWN) where participants can self-manage their registration and opt-in to notifications. A how-to guide has been prepared, but not yet publicly available.</li> <li>• New river register format to provide additional clarity on upcoming opportunities to assist participants with staffing requirements at various times in the day and night.</li> <li>• Mr Craig White raised that discharge points are separate from mines at Bengalla. Lack of lighting for overnight discharge periods causes safety issues. As a result, Bengalla must choose between safety onsite by beginning discharges later during daylight or making full use of opportunities.</li> <li>• River register update was based on feedback from information session that many participants must have additional staff onsite waiting for when river register reissues will come through or not.</li> <li>• Participants have different windows for discharge and under the model participants have fixed times when they can discharge during an event. Mr Craig White questioned whether flow in the river was so sensitive to require such strict intervals.</li> <li>• Mount Pleasant did not exist when the model was originally set up. Mr Craig White suggested revising the model and questioned whether the flow conditions have changed since inception. Suggested that travel time to Singleton for each site may have changed. The model has not changed since its establishment.</li> <li>• EPA noted potential complexity in reviewing the water model and noted that all stakeholders in the scheme would need to be consulted. May involve additional scheme costs.</li> <li>• Bengalla has received increasing mine water levels over last three years.</li> <li>• Water NSW noted if more participants are discharging within the same block time, then the TAD may be reduced as salinity is more likely to spike temporarily.</li> <li>• Unless a full review of the model is undertaken, if one participants' discharge time is to be moved an hour then all participants need to be moved the same amount.</li> <li>• Ambient salinity levels can exceed the salinity targets at times. Mr Craig White suggested mitigating this using dam releases.</li> <li>• Ms Sally Hunt asked if river registers were publicly available. Water NSW advised they are available on Water Insights or RealTime Data. WaterNSW has not officially moved to WaterInsights, with HRSTS Discharge Points Data still in testing.</li> <li>• Real time data links have been removed from Water NSW corporate website and should be reinstated for ease of navigation.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. EPA to distribute EWN registration link and how-to guide to Committee Members with Minutes.</li> <li>6. EPA and Water NSW to review the discharge timeframes in the river registers noting the operational concerns raised by Craig White</li> <li>7. Water NSW to investigate website issues to reinstate links to RealTime Data.</li> </ol>

<p>8. Information Session</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we respond to equity issues without reviewing the water model? EPA wants to investigate it with Regulation review.</li> <li>• Equity an issue due to nature and geography of the region.</li> <li>• No one solution to resolve the issue completely.</li> <li>• Operational and legislative actions being investigated to review and resolve equity issues. Further discussions with the Committee to take on feedback which can feed into these reviews.</li> <li>• EPA asked Mr Craig White to send an email detailing specific equity concerns.</li> <li>• Definitional issues – is the issue of equity between sectors or between participants in one sector?</li> <li>• Water model – uncertain of last review. Nature of the river has changed over the last twenty years. A lot of human intervention in the model has occurred in this time as well. Reviews should be conducted on a regular basis.</li> <li>• Regulation Review a key feedback point to be front and centre of Information Session outcomes, including the 400EC definition of saline water.</li> </ul>	<p>8. Mr. Craig White to email EPA about specific equity concerns.</p>
<p>9. Improvement Works</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed summary and scope of improvement works was circulated for feedback in December 2022.</li> </ul> <p>Regulatory Framework Review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High priority.</li> <li>• Internal discussions at EPA have been conducted and will be led by Regulatory Policy, Initiatives and Advice (RPIA) Division. They will decide on the scope and time frames.</li> <li>• Summary of feedback and scope proposal ready for RPIA to review and kick off meeting next week.</li> <li>• Timing may look different to original proposal.</li> <li>• Regulation reviews follow a standardised process including a consultation phase. Updates will be provided along the way. Review to follow similar process to previous review.</li> <li>• Costs are still to be discussed. Source of funding depends on the scope of the review.</li> <li>• Is there a way for items to be immediately addressed or do they have to be packaged together as part of a full review? To be discussed.</li> </ul> <p>Real-time monitoring and analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High priority.</li> <li>• Package with model improvements.</li> <li>• Staged progression (three stages) is proposed based on what can be reasonably implemented.</li> <li>• Stage 1: Basic alarming with SMS to Water NSW &amp; EPA discharges occur outside of a River Register. Helps improve responsiveness and agility. Clarified in river register policy.</li> <li>• Stage 2: More complex alarming with SMS to participants when discharges exceed allowance of TAD. Will improve ability for participants to react to and remedy non-compliant activity.</li> <li>• Stage 3: Complex analysis of real-time discharges to improve model agility and reporting.</li> <li>• Water NSW looking into cost estimates of Stages 1 and 2. EPA to get back to Committee when cost estimates are available and receive feedback.</li> </ul>	<p>9. EPA to provide a flow chart of the regulation review process &amp; previous report.</p> <p>10. Mr. Craig White to provide information on what additional information on Reg Review is needed.</p> <p>11. EPA to discuss internally whether some reg review items can be expedited.</p> <p>12. Water NSW to get cost estimates for Stages 1 and 2 of real-time monitoring platform and EPA to circulate to Operations Committee for review.</p> <p>13. EPA &amp; WaterNSW to circulate more detailed scope of real-time monitoring works for feedback.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr Craig White questioned what reasonable and feasible response times would be to alarms.</li> <li>• Proposed system is only a warning/alarming platform, with compliance issues still managed by EPA Operations Team.</li> </ul> <p>Credit trading platform improvements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium priority.</li> <li>• Basic improvements or more complex improvements, such as functionality with mobile phones.</li> <li>• Noted that previous costings for proposed works in 2017 were around \$25,000 for base improvements, \$100,000 for complex improvements.</li> <li>• EPA is looking into updated cost estimates.</li> <li>• Original scoping documents not available yet.</li> <li>• Committee Members agree the current platform works as is and any updates should undergo a cost-benefits analysis to determine need.</li> </ul> <p>Updated guide for credit trading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low priority.</li> <li>• User-friendly guide.</li> </ul> <p>EPA Internal Operating Procedure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In final stages.</li> <li>• Clarifying roles of EPA CDS and Operations staff/teams.</li> <li>• Mr Gary Mulhearn raised that there is a disparity between date-based reporting for annual returns and block-based reporting for Discharge Record Sheets, making the reporting process cumbersome.</li> </ul> <p>Website review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium priority.</li> <li>• River register policy is in progress.</li> <li>• Intent to be published to website alongside a page providing clarity on the model.</li> <li>• General website updates have been completed.</li> <li>• Project update page on website to become available in future.</li> </ul>	
10. Budget 2023-24	<p>EPA costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salary costs were previously charged to one role.</li> <li>• Now a need to accurately reflect the time of multiple staff working on HRSTS.</li> <li>• EPA proposed that future meeting schedule would follow a pattern of one face-to-face meeting and one online meeting each year. All members agreed to this format moving forward.</li> <li>• Two new participants have been added to the scheme in last 12 months – Mangoola and Mount Pleasant.</li> <li>• There is some appetite for committee meetings to be held on-site at a power station or mine. Mr Gary Mulhearn expressed hosting at MTW. Can be a useful education tool.</li> </ul>	14. EPA to investigate a site to host the November meeting.
11. Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct	<p>Dr WEJ Paradise noted couple of suggested changes before endorsement of the documents. Endorsement in principle once these changes are made.</p> <p>Terms of reference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Departing members to recommend replacements.</li> <li>• More open than simply “tapping” people on the shoulder.</li> </ul>	15. EPA to make WEJ’s suggested changes to ToR and CoC then circulate to Operations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Committee endorses the Terms of Reference once amended.</li> </ul> <p>Code of conduct:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the Chair is in breach, should be referred to the appropriate contact at the EPA rather than the Committee.</li> <li>The Committee endorses the Code of Conduct once amended.</li> </ul>	Committee Members and Operations Committee meeting attendees.
12. Next Meeting and Forward Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Next meeting to be Friday 10 November 2023.</li> <li>One year to start modem upgrade. Water NSW will set up notification process. To be circulated out of session.</li> </ul>	<p>16. EPA to circulate all slides presented at the meeting.</p> <p>17. EPA to send out a placeholder for next meeting.</p>