



Hunter River Salinity Trading Scheme Operations Committee – Meeting Minutes

Meeting:	HRSTS Operations Committee	Date:	Friday 10 November 2023
Location:	Mount Arthur Coal Mine	Time:	13:00-15:00
Last Meeting Date:	19 May 2023	Next Meeting Date:	5 July 2024
Present:	<p>Dr WEJ Paradice (WP) – Chair Lisa Richards (LR) – Discharge Licence Holder – BHP – Mt Arthur Coal Gary Mulhearn (GM) – Discharge Licence Holder – Yancoal MTW Christopher Rooney (CR) – Discharge Licence Holder – AGL Macquarie Robyn Parker (RP) – River Management Committee – Local Land Services Ken Bray (KB) – Irrigators Representative – Hunter Valley Water Users Association Danielle Doughty (DD), Manager Coastal Waters – NSW Department of Planning and Environment – Water Group Deepak Kumar (DK) – Community Representative (delegate for Thava Palanisami) Mahmood Khan (MK) – Water NSW Partha Saha (PS) – Water NSW Ben Mulhearn (BM) – Water NSW Tom Riley (TR) – Water NSW Audrey Yim (AY) – EPA Amy McLaughlin (AM) – EPA David Posniak (DP) – EPA Jenny Lange (JL) – EPA (online)</p>		
Apologies:	<p>Thava Palanisami – Community Representative Craig White – Discharge Licence Holder – Bengalla</p>		
Guests:			

Agenda Item	Main Discussion Points				Actions							
1. Welcome, Acknowledgement of Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Committee and attendees acknowledged the traditional owners of the lands on which all attendees (in person and online) attended the meeting. 											
2. Declarations of Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No declarations of interest were announced. 											
3. New Attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deepak Kumar – University of Newcastle, attending in lieu of Thava Palanisami (environmental representative) 											
4. Previous Meeting Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes accepted 											
5. Actions from Previous Meeting - Update	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Action Item No</th> <th>1. Action</th> <th>2. Party Responsible</th> <th>3. Status</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Water NSW and EPA to discuss the issue of carry-over spills and the notification of participants on</td> <td>4. Water NSW</td> <td>Completed</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Action Item No	1. Action	2. Party Responsible	3. Status	1	Water NSW and EPA to discuss the issue of carry-over spills and the notification of participants on	4. Water NSW	Completed			
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	Glenbawn Dam releases.		
2	Explanation at next meeting of the approach on notifying participants of Glenbawn Dam releases. Information to be circulated to Committee members prior.	EPA + Water NSW	Completed In future, participants will be notified of Glenbawn Dam releases and the likelihood of a river register.
3	EPA to incorporate Glenbawn Dam release data into the HRSTS Annual Report procedure where appropriate.	EPA	In progress
4	EPA and Water NSW to discuss approach to manage the modem upgrades from 3G to 4/5G network	EPA + Water NSW	Completed There will be a communications strategy.
5	EPA to distribute EWN registration link and how-to guide to Committee Members with Minutes.	EPA	Completed
6	EPA and Water NSW to review the discharge timeframes in the river registers noting the operational concerns raised by Craig White	EPA + Water NSW	Completed This will be reviewed as part of the Regulation review.
7	Water NSW to investigate website issues to reinstate links to RealTime Data	Water NSW	Completed There is now a link on the EPA website and the Water Insights webpage.
8	Mr. Craig White to email EPA about specific equity concerns	Craig White	EPA has not received any emails.
9	EPA to provide a flow chart of the regulation review process & previous report	EPA	Completed
10	Mr. Craig White to provide information on what additional information on Reg Review is needed	Craig White	EPA has not received any information.
11	EPA to discuss internally whether some reg review items can be expedited	EPA	Completed The EPA will outline further in Agenda item 7.
12	Water NSW to get cost estimates for Stages 1 and 2 of	Water NSW	Stage 1 quote received. Stage 2 quote pending.

		real-time monitoring platform and EPA to circulate to Operations Committee for review			
	13	EPA & WaterNSW to circulate more detailed scope of real-time monitoring works for feedback	EPA + Water NSW	Pending quote for Stage 2.	
	14	EPA to investigate a site to host the November meeting	EPA	Completed Site inspection and meeting at Mt Arthur.	
	15	EPA to make WEJ's suggested changes to ToR and CoC then circulate to Operations Committee Members and Operations Committee meeting attendees	EPA	Completed ToR and CoC are now published on EPA's website.	
	16	EPA to circulate all slides presented at the meeting.	EPA	Completed	
	17	EPA to send out a placeholder for next meeting	EPA	Completed	
6. HRSTS Annual Performance Report 2022-23	<p>EPA Presentation</p> <p>Upper Sector – There were some exceedances of the EC daily discharge as depicted in the maximum daily EC discharge plot on the graph. However, the average daily EC, which was generally below the 600EC target, this would suggest the “max EC” exceedances were for very short periods. The majority of these occurred within discharge opportunities but there were a few instances where one participant discharge outside of these opportunities on emergency grounds, this caused the salinity to rise above the 600EC target during this period.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • There was a very high EC spike in April 2023 – not clear why? Committee discussion suggests this might be due to tributary inflows. • Middle Sector – Generally below 900 EC target. EC did drop significantly in April 2023 (appears to be the same time as EC spiked in the upper sector). • Committee recommended publishing the graphs so you can see the granularity in the graphs (consider logarithmic scale) • Lower sector – Generally below 900 EC target. • FY22/23 - very high flow in the river compared to previous years. • Committee suggested it might be worthwhile capturing the sector credit factor influence on opportunities. Even though there were opportunities the sector credit factor reduces the TAD. • Still questions about the Upper Sector and why there is a 600 EC limit, particularly as ambient levels already exceed 600 EC. • Historical records are not clear on why the 600 EC target level for the upper sector and 900 EC target for the middle and lower sectors were set. Investigation and research into this is ongoing. 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPA to consider splitting the graphs into different time periods or plots where necessary so the reader can access the information more readily. Consider a logarithmic scale if the figures are across a large range. • EPA to capture the role of the sector credit factor and its impact on discharge opportunities. • EPA to include more detail about the emergency discharge permitted last year. • WaterNSW to assist the EPA in investigations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WP suggested there is probably a good reason and it shouldn't just be changed. He suggested that further rigorous background research into the initial work undertaken to establish the scheme needs to be recovered from the archives for the benefit of committee members. • LR would like to see the rationale and science behind the EC targets. • EC targets will be reviewed as part of the Regulation review process. • WP would like more transparency about the emergency discharge that was permitted last year. How did it happen? What are the consequences? What is happening to better manage the site and ensure appropriate water management practices? Especially considering the challenges in the Upper Sector. Transparency is critical if the scheme is to maintain acceptance and support from the local community. • Lisa explained the water management pressures for Mount Arthur around the same time as the permitted emergency discharge. There were pressures on staff to use the emergency discharge provision under the Regulation however Mount Arthur chose to manage its water on site. LR reiterated the lack of clarity with the provision. • EPA is working to develop guidance on the emergency provision which aims to improve clarity, define emergency and confirm the process. This will involve consultation with relevant stakeholders. • In relation to impacts on the Catchment, the Committee spoke about the significance of tributary inflows particularly Goulburn River. Example: Ulan coal mine treats its discharges through reverse osmosis which are then discharged into the Goulburn River. Historically discharges from mines in the Goulburn River catchment are not captured in HRSTS however there are impacts on the Hunter River. 	<p>into March/April 2023 EC spike.</p>
<p>7. Scheme Improvement Works</p>	<p>EPA Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation review – EPA's Policy and Strategy Division are leading this work. Scope should be refined around March 2024. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ While waiting for the Regulation Review, the 400EC saline water definition is to be managed on a site-specific basis via Environment Protection Licences. ○ Gary has received EPA's feedback on the matter and will follow up with EPA Ops. ○ Lisa is also interested in the matter. ○ Minerals Council would like feedback on Reg Review and timeframe. ○ Jenny confirmed there will be more discussions between EPA and mines re: mining closures. ○ The EPA confirmed it will not bring forward the HRSTS Regulation review at this point in time. Some of the related matters are being explored through non-legislative methods and policy processes. • LR commented that HRSTS funds should not be used to fund standard government process for legislative review. The Scheme funds are for the operation of the Scheme, not to support internal process. This was supported by other members in the room. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GM to liaise with EPA Operations on 400EC matter. • EPA to update where appropriate the progress on the Regulation Review to NSW Minerals Council. • EPA to seek internal advice on confirmation for where funds for the scientific study should come from. • EPA to send out communication details on modem upgrades in

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realtime monitoring and analysis – quotes for stage 1 received, still waiting on Stage 2 and 3 quotes. Modem network 3G to 4G. Need to migrate to new modems. Scheme will provide new modems. WaterNSW will work with participants to manage installation. Communication details will go out in December 2023. Feb/Mar 2024 installation. Policy for issuing and updating of river registers – guidance will be circulated to participants before it is published on the EPA website. 	December 2023.
8. HRSTS Expenditure FY 2022-23	<p>EPA Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22/23 Expenditure – clarification - cost for doing further site-specific investigations was paid by the participant involved. 	
9. Water NSW systems and operations update	<p>WaterNSW Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historically high salinity levels in the Hunter River might explain why the Upper Sector has a lower EC level compared to Middle and Lower Sector. There were releases from Glenbawn dam, however, only higher volume releases triggered a river register. CR suggested looking at a shorter data range eg, 30 years (rather than 100 years) as drought and flood events are truncating, cycles are changing. This may give us better insights on salinity, river register frequency and events. 	
10. General Business	<p>Emergency discharge defence provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LR would like to understand if you create a discharge event by purchasing water (emergency discharge defence provision), whether the event can only be exclusive to the participant purchasing the water. How do we ensure participants manage their discharges and operate within the legal framework. Need to ensure consultation with all stakeholders when developing the guidance. CR is interested in the legal framework as there are closure plans for the power station and he is working with DPE on how to manage the water. Would like clarity on how to manage any discharges of highly saline water within the scheme framework. <p>Terms of Reference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sitting fees published on EPA's website are incorrect – these will be updated and corrected. Reminder to members that they are entitled to sitting fees. Just need complete some forms and send back to DP. <p>Local Land Service Hunter River forum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forum is on 30 November in Singleton. Invite is open to all Committee Members. DP will circulate invite. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EPA will consult with stakeholders when developing guidance on the emergency discharge defence provision in the POEO (HRSTS) Regulation. EPA to circulate invite to Hunter River forum to HRSTS Committee members.
11. Next meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friday 5 July 2024 Meeting will be online 1000 – 1200. The meeting will be after the 2024 credit auction. There is no confirmed date, participants are interested on details. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send details of credit auction once date is finalised.
12. Meeting closed 0300pm	<p>Thank you to LR and Jimmy Nixon for hosting the meeting and site inspection of Mount Arthur Coal Mine.</p>	

