



# MEETING MINUTES

<b>Committee name</b>	Hunter Water Customer and Community Advisory Group (CCAG)
<b>Date and time</b>	Tuesday 18 June 2024, 9.30am to 12 noon
<b>Location</b>	coNEXA Advanced Water Treatment Plant site, 17 Channel Road, Mayfield West

## MEMBERS PRESENT

Cr Brian Adamthwaite	Lake Macquarie City Council <b>(Chair)</b>
Cr Peter Francis	Port Stephens Council
Mr Graham Jones	Maitland Masonic Centre
Ms Sue Johns	National Seniors Association
Ms Linda Bowden	Save the Williams River Coalition
Cr Dr Elizabeth Adamczyk	City of Newcastle
Mr David Beins	
Mayor John Connors	Dungog Shire Council

## APOLOGIES

Ms Thea Bray	Public Interest Advocacy Centre
Cr Karen Jackson	Cessnock City Council
Cr Sally Halliday	Maitland City Council
Mr Douglas McCloskey	Public Interest Advocacy Centre
Assoc Prof Troy Gaston	University of Newcastle
Mr Glenn Lyons	Local Land Services
Ms Jean McGarry	Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhoods Alliance
Mr Leroy Wilkinson	
Mr Joseph Popov	Business Hunter

## IN ATTENDANCE

Emma Berry	Executive Manager, Strategy & Engagement
Declan Clausen	Group Manager Strategy & External Affairs
Tony McClymont	Program Lead Recycled Water and Integrated Water Management
Clara Laydon	Program Lead, Purified Recycled Water, Hunter Water
Laura Boland	Stakeholder and Government Relations Advisor (CCAG Secretary)

## WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting at 9.30 am and provided an Acknowledgment of Country.

Apologies were received and noted.

## OVERVIEW OF AGENDA AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Nil conflicts of interest were declared.

## MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The April 2024 meeting minutes were adopted as a true and correct record of the meeting (M: Mr Peter Francis, S: Ms Linda Bowden).

## HUNTER WATER OPERATIONAL REPORT

### Ms Emma Berry, Executive Manager Strategy & Engagement

Ms Berry advised that Hunter Water's Managing Director, Darren Cleary, was an apology for the meeting. Ms Berry provided an operational update, noting the following:

- Water storages are high, particularly in the Tomago Sandbeds, which are 100% full. Water conservation in the community remains good, tracking at about 7.5% better than expected.
- **Pricing Proposal (2025-2030):**
  - customer engagement is now at the end of Stage 4 (of 5). A customer panel met on 18 May 2024 to discuss Hunter Water's Customer Outcomes, Customer Report Card and mechanisms to keep Hunter Water accountable to delivering upon its commitments over the pricing period. The customer panel supported the formation of a **community committee** which would meet regularly over the five year pricing period. The community committee will receive information on progress and a publicly-available score card will be produced to help guide any necessary adjustments needed over the pricing period.
  - The customer panel's endorsed the Customer Outcomes with minor revisions of the 'key customer outcomes' highlight that customers value being treated with respect, receiving a response in a timely manner, and environmental sustainability.
  - Phase 5, the final stage of customer engagement, includes public exhibition of the pricing proposal. Hunter Water is working towards finalising the pricing proposal in September 2024, for submission to IPART. CCAG will be invited by IPART to comment on the pricing proposal during the public exhibition period.
- **PFAS Update:**
  - A statement on PFAS is available on the Hunter Water [website](#).
  - Hunter Water complies with Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG)
  - Hunter Water routinely tests for PFAS in all our drinking water supply zones, and reports all detections over 0.002 micrograms per litre (2 parts per trillion), which is our independent laboratory's limit of reporting.
  - We have one of the most robust and comprehensive PFAS monitoring programs for drinking water the state. The main driver for this has been as a result of historic PFAS use at RAAF Base Williamstown, and impacts on some bore stations at the Tomago Sandbeds. We note that the USA has introduced new guidelines for PFAS and that Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is currently reviewing Australia's current ADWG.
  - We note that the USA has manufactured PFAS historically, while Australia has never manufactured PFAS. This history may contribute to the more conservative PFAS guidelines in the USA, due to the higher levels of PFAS seen in the USA as a result of this historic manufacturing.
- **Love Water Grant recipients 2024:**
  - Hunter Water has announced the 18 recipients of its 2024 Love Water Grants program, awarding over \$125,000 for the program's fifth year.

- Members noted the list of recipients across the region, which are publicly available on the Hunter Water [website](#).
- Members asked if Hunter Water has noticed an increase in vulnerable people accessing customer support. Ms Berry noted that we have seen an increase in requests for financial assistance with paying bills and that this has been considered in the pricing proposal process.

Ms Berry's presentation is available on the [CCAG website](#).

## THE CURRENT & FUTURE OF RECYCLED WATER

**Clara Laydon – Program Lead, Purified Recycled Water**

**Tony McClymont – Program Lead Recycled Water and Integrated Water Management**

Ms Laydon and Mr McClymont provided members with an introduction and update on recycled water in the Lower Hunter, including existing end users, current schemes, and future opportunities both in the near and long term.

The presentation is available on the [CCAG website](#).

Key points of discussion:

- Industrial customers of recycled water usually need high quality/low mineral water supply.
- Higher quality treatment comes at a greater cost.
- The energy transition towards hydrogen production will require a reliable, high-quality supply of recycled water. This is true for the Hydrogen Hub planned for Kooragang Island. Hunter Water is currently supporting investigations into the provision of high-quality recycled water to the future Hydrogen Hub.
- Recycled Water and stormwater harvesting have strong community support. Councils such as Maitland and Cessnock are already exploring opportunities for beneficial reuse with Hunter Water.
- Ms Laydon noted that we need long, considered engagement with community about purified recycled water (PRW) ahead of drought pressures.
- Hunter Water's customer survey showed around three quarters of respondents were supportive of further investigation into PRW options to supplement the water supply.
- Producing PRW is a similar process to seawater desalination but can be considerably cheaper.
- Technical challenges in PRW include: the need to centralise feedwater (effluent); product water has to be transported to a storage for naturalisation, where some water may be lost to evaporation; PRW & natural water mix needs to be treated by conventional water treatment; and brine must be managed.
- There are many PRW schemes happening across Australia. Orange in Central West NSW has had the first urban stormwater harvesting scheme for potable water augmentation, operating since 2009. Other PRW schemes are underway in WA and Sydney (validation plant).
- Hunter Water is at the start of the PRW journey and will be engaging with our communities to commence a public discussion on the future opportunities for our region. We will look to other schemes' successes, so we don't 'reinvent the wheel'.

## GENERAL BUSINESS & QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers to questions previously submitted on notice by Cr Sally Halliday were answered in writing in the June agenda, which is available on the [CCAG web page](#).

Members noted the value of having electric barbeques available for public use at Grahamstown Dam. Hunter Water is open to exploring options for new barbeques, but will need to consider this in light of future upgrade works for Grahamstown Dam, and available funding.

A member noted that one of their community constituents had raised concerns over an increase in their water bill in a managed housing complex. Hunter Water has since followed up with the customer directly to provide advice regarding billing.

## **SITE TOUR OF CONEXA RECYCLED WATER PLANT**

Members were taken on a tour of the coNEXA Recycled Water Plant by David Colley – Plant Manager, and Liam Kilcullen – Manager Contract Operations coNEXA.

- The plant provides recycled water to industrial customers on Kooragang Island and supplies around 10.5 million litres per day.
- The plant uses effluent (wastewater) supplied from Hunter Water and treats it by forcing the wastewater through membranes. The water recovery rate is around 95%. The lifespan of a membrane is around 5 to 7 years.
- The supply of recycled water is highly regulated.

## **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 13 August 2024.