



MEETING MINUTES

Committee name	Hunter Water Customer and Community Advisory Group (CCAG)
Date and time	Monday 24 March 2025
Location	Hunter Water Head Office

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cr Brian Adamthwaite	Lake Macquarie City Council (Chair)
Ms Jean McGarry	Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhoods Alliance
Ms Sue Johns	National Seniors Association
Mr Ken Edwards	Save the Williams River Coalition
Cr Deahnna Richardson	City of Newcastle
Cr Mark Mason	Cessnock City Council
Cr Warrick Penfold	Maitland City Council
Cr Michael Dowling	Dungog Shire Council
Dr Craig Evans	The University of Newcastle
Mr David Beins	
Mr Douglas McCloskey	Public Interest Advocacy Centre

APOLOGIES

Ms Thea Bray	Public Interest Advocacy Centre
Mr Graham Jones	Maitland Masonic Centre
Ms Linda Bowden	Save the Williams River Coalition (represented by Mr Ken Edwards)
Mr Glenn Lyons	Local Land Services
Cr Peter Francis	Port Stephens Council

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Darren Cleary	Managing Director
Ms Emma Berry	Executive Manager, Strategy & Engagement
Mr Declan Clausen	Group Manager Strategy & External Affairs
Ms 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 November 2024 meeting minutes were adopted as a true and correct record of the meeting.

HUNTER WATER OPERATIONAL UPDATE

- **Darren Cleary – Managing Director**

Water Storages

Mr Cleary reported that water storages remain healthy, with variable rainfall observed over the past month, including significant rainfall in January 2025.

Belmont Desalination Plant Update

Construction of the Belmont Desalination Plant commenced in December 2024 and remains on track for completion in 2028.

Mr Cleary noted that solar panels will be installed at the plant to supply a small portion of the required operational energy, with the remainder sourced from the renewable energy market. Members inquired whether the solar panels would be manufactured in Australia. Mr Cleary took the question on notice.

A Community Consultative Committee has been established as part of the desalination project to ensure engagement with the community and key stakeholders during construction and early operation.

Additionally, a new shared footpath has been installed along Beach Street, Belmont South, in collaboration with Lake Macquarie City Council. This path aims to improve pedestrian and bike access during the plant's construction.

Williams River Stabilisation Works

Mr Cleary noted ongoing progress in stabilisation and rehabilitation works along the banks of the Williams River at Seaham.

Impact of January Storms

Mr Cleary discussed the effects of the January storms on Hunter Water's network, including temporary power outages that impacted pump stations and wastewater treatment plants.

In response to unusually-high flows over the Chichester Dam spillway, Hunter Water activated its dam safety plan in collaboration with the State Emergency Service. Mr Cleary acknowledged the need to improve the clarity of communication around evacuation warnings with the SES and downstream residents.

Members asked whether batteries are used to provide backup power during outages. Mr Cleary explained the use of generators to return power to assets during blackouts, and noted that Hunter Water is currently investigating battery options.

Members asked what can happen if the water over the spillway gets too high. Mr Cleary noted that there are alert levels that trigger notifications to downstream residents to evacuate. He also noted that long-term works are underway to strengthen the dam wall.

Members also inquired about dam-break flood mapping for Chichester Dam. Mr Cleary confirmed that these maps have been provided to affected downstream landowners when requested.

NSW Parliament PFAS Inquiry

Mr Cleary noted that Hunter Water recently gave evidence at the Legislative Council Select Committee on PFAS Contamination in Waterways and Drinking Water Supplies Throughout New South Wales. The transcript and video of the public hearing are available on the NSW Parliament website.

Love Water Grants

Mr Cleary noted that applications for the 2025 Love Water grants have closed, and winners will be announced in the coming months.

Mr Cleary's presentation is available on the [CCAG webpage](#).

FUTURE CUSTOMER AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEES

- **Laura Boland – Stakeholder and Government Relations Advisor**
- **Declan Clausen – Group Manager Strategy and External Affairs**

The Customer and Community Advisory Group (CCAG) is Hunter Water's longest-standing stakeholder and customer forum, originally established to meet the requirements of our previous operating licence.

Ms Boland noted that as part of our 2025-2030 pricing proposal, Hunter Water will also be establishing a new Community Committee to mark Hunter Water's 'report card' and ensure that the pricing proposal delivers on its 'promises'.

To ensure the complementary functioning of both groups, the CCAG will undergo a refresh in the 2025/26 financial year. Hunter Water values the CCAG for maintaining relationships and receiving advice from stakeholder groups.

One of the key differences between the CCAG and the Community Committee is that the CCAG represents a range of interest groups and constituents, while the Community Committee represents individuals from a range of demographics.

Members discussed and compared the levels of participation in decision-making offered by the two groups. The CCAG primarily operates within the 'Consult' level of the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, engaging on a broad range of issues. In contrast, the Customer Committee is intended to operate at the 'Involve' level of the spectrum, with a more focused role, specifically contributing to matters related to our pricing proposal.

Members recommended that Hunter Water provide greater clarity on where the various items presented to the CCAG fall within the participation spectrum.

Ms Boland outlined the proposed updates to the CCAG charter and its functions, including:

- a name change to Stakeholder Advisory Forum ('SAF')
- new member organisations/groups to be added
- selection of a Deputy Chair position
- additional clarification on members' communication with constituents
- revised term limits

Members participated in an interactive survey, which asked: What do you value about being a CCAG member? Which organisations/groups do you think should be invited as members of the SAF? How do you currently communicate with your constituents about issues relating to Hunter Water? What improvements would you like to see in the SAF Charter or general operation of the SAF?

Key themes from the responses to these questions included the following:

- Members value the opportunity to hear about issues firsthand from Hunter Water, and the opportunity to participate in decision making.
- Members communicate with their constituents in a range of ways, such as social media, meetings, sharing minutes, and newsletters. Ms Boland noted that Hunter Water is happy to help produce information that is ready for sharing in these forums.
- Members suggested that Hunter Water could provide more frequent updates in between quarterly meetings.
- Members also expressed interest in more site visits to assets and hearing from operational staff to learn about day-to-day work at Hunter Water, or a particular focus area of the business.
- Members suggested additional members to the SAF could be from land conservation, business/industry, fisheries, indigenous, multicultural, agriculture and youth interest groups.

The results of the survey will be considered in the SAF Charter, which will be presented at the June CCAG meeting for endorsement.

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

HUNTER WATER'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

- **Renee Fedder – Group Manager Communication and Engagement**

Ms Renee Fedder presented an update on Hunter Water's community engagement strategy, which embeds trust as a key reporting measure and draws on learnings from major engagement activities.

Ms Fedder outlined a variety of recent engagement initiatives undertaken by Hunter Water, including participation in local show days and university welcome week events. These activities focused on key topics such as water conservation, the water cycle, and the importance of proper waste disposal ('what not to flush').

In 2024, Hunter Water's education programs reached approximately 10,000 students across 154 schools, covering a diverse range of engagement topics.

Members highlighted the value of focusing on young children as a key audience in Hunter Water's education initiatives.

Ms Fedder's presentation is available on the [CCAG webpage](#).

NATIONAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2025

- **Michael Steel – Treasury Analyst**

Mr Michael Steel presented the 2024 National Performance Report (NPR), which compares Hunter Water's performance against that of 85 other water utilities across more than 150 indicators.

Mr Steel noted that federal, state, and local governments can use the NPR to assess the efficiency and sustainability of the water sector – it helps identify trends in pricing, demand, and operational efficiency for future policy adjustments.

Mr Steel focused his presentation on five key indicators for Hunter Water's performance:

- P7: Annual bill based on 200kL water consumption per annum (water and wastewater)
- F13: Combined operating cost - water and wastewater (per property)
- C15: Average duration of an unplanned interruption to water supply (minutes)
- A10: Real Losses (Litres, per service connection, per day)
- A14: Sewerage main breaks and chokes (per 100km of sewer mains)

Mr Steel noted that performance against A14 is heavily dependent on climate and aging infrastructure, and A10 performance declined in the reporting period due to several large, remote breaks in the network.

Mr Steel's presentation available on the [CCAG webpage](#). The full NPR dataset and report is available on the Bureau of Meteorology website.

GENERAL BUSINESS & QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Questions on notice received during the November 2024 meeting were discussed, and are available in the March 2025 meeting agenda, available on the CCAG website.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 17 June 9:30-12:00 – location TBC.