

## Lower Limestone Coast WAP Stakeholder Advisory Group Minutes

Meeting No. 6, 17 May 2023, 10:30 am – 3:00 pm  
UniSA, Mount Gambier

### Objectives

- Discuss latest resource condition trends in relation to industry concerns.
- Presentation of risk management and protection measures.
- Presentation of specialist principles.
- Presentation of confined aquifer and detailed presentation on stakeholder information sessions (deferred due to time).

### Attendees:

**Group Attendees** – Penny Schulz (Chair). Pete Bissell (Chair), Belinda Williamson, Claire Davies, Claire Harding, Graeme Hamilton, Kerry DeGaris, Michelle Irvine, Terry Buckley, Darren Shelden, Alan Rossouw, Melissa Herpich, James Prescott, John Hunt.

**Staff Attendees** – Sue Botting, Liz Perkins, Ryan Judd.

**Apologies** – Wayne Hancock, Nick Hillier.

### Welcome and agenda

The Chair welcomed everyone and thanked advisory group members and staff for their attendance.

### Minutes

Amendment was requested to the minutes from meeting 5 to reflect that keeping or changing the licencing components structure has benefits and risks in both directions.

Outside of that change minutes from meeting 5 were confirmed as true and correct. Moved by: Claire Davies. Seconded by: Jim Prescott. All were in favour.

### Action outcomes to note

None

### Discussion of current resource condition trends

Liz Perkins and Sue Botting provided data on latest resource condition trends.

#### Key Points:

- Historical context around the modification of our landscape and the changes that continue to impact groundwater resource condition trends.
- Current resource condition trends.

#### Discussion:

- Who is accountable for the data given the disclaimer at the end of the resource condition trend report? The Department for Environment and Water (DEW) are accountable for the data in the resource condition trend report but they are not accountable for how an individual or organisation chooses to use or apply the information.
- Will there be a report that addresses hydraulic gradient? There are no reports produced that address hydraulic gradient. DEW can be requested to consider this as part of their review and it is something that can be further looked at through application of the sub regional or regional groundwater modelling.
- Some discussion around the logic of allocating medium risk management areas in excess of Total Available Recharge (TAR) and in some cases above recharge. Some members provided historical perspectives to the decisions noting that at the time use was well below allocations and not expected to exceed TAR.
- Use remains under allocation, while the allocation remains there is a continued risk that use can increase towards full allocation and exceed TAR.
- Impact of the drains was raised and discussed.
- Some discussion around extraction versus salinity trends and condition of water as you have to deepen bores.
- Discussion around how what people see in relation to resource condition trends in their day to day operations may not necessarily reflect resource condition trends presented. LC Landscape Board has a responsibility to use the best available science and data to underpin the plan.
- Discussion of the Border Groundwater Agreement - Victoria doesn't include forestry in its licencing of water, Victoria more concerned about surface water, no indication that they intend to licence forestry for water at this point in time.
- Considerable discussion was framed around what data and data timeframes should be presented for the public/stakeholders to understand, or for members to assess the Plan's success at sustainably managing the resource. Some members expressed an interest in only seeing 10 years of data, over the life the plan, versus other members seeking to see longer term resource condition trends beyond what has been monitored.
- For some members resource condition trends seemed to make sense and can be explained, for others resource condition trends were unexpected and important to their industries in the future.
- Others discussed why the current declines might be occurring and whether they were real.
- In terms of resource condition the most significant concern raised by industry was what management actions might result (e.g. reductions) in an amended plan as a result of resource condition trends, particularly if there was agreement from industry that resource condition trends were a concern. It was raised by some industry representatives that reductions would be a concern.
- Equally concerns were raised around how the community might view resource condition trends and success of the Plan in the sustainable management of the resource.
- Concerns were raised around resource conditions and what these mean for groundwater dependent ecosystems and how resource condition trends reflect the intent of the Plan from a groundwater dependent ecosystem perspective.
- Initially members were not comfortable to discuss whether the Plan was a success or failure. Industry representatives indicated that they see the Plan as being largely successful with a lot of wins, but maybe it hasn't achieved what it intended in relation to resource condition.

## SAG DECISION

None.

## Risk Management: hydrological assessment and protection of groundwater dependent ecosystems

Sue Botting provided an overview of the hydrological assessment and protection of groundwater dependent ecosystems principles.

### Discussion:

- Hydrological assessment viewed as complicated.
- Some discussion around the 1.25x recharge, suggested it relates to the corners of the 16m<sup>2</sup> circle not being used. The 1.25x was raised as being particularly important for some industries (example given around dairy and without it distances that cow would be required to walk). But equally concerns from an environment perspective were raised around what the 1.25x allows.
- Industry would like the ability to work through the likelihood of a trade or transfer passing the hydro test prior to having to commit to the fee. Would be good to be able to sit with someone and work through it. DEW Water licensing not currently resourced to provide this service.
- There is an ability to combine land titles on a licence to get around the restraints of the hydro test – poses a risk. Movement of an allocation within a land title can still be a significant distance from the original source.
- A view that the hydro test needs to exist, a part of being responsible around how water is extracted.
- Irrigators would like the opportunity for leased water to be able to be leased over multiple years. As systems works now you can't reapply before 1-2nd of July and by this time lease has ceased. Would like ability to reapply in the months leading up to lease ceasing.
- It was acknowledged that you don't need the permission of a land owner to move water onto their property, view from some that this should be amended, you should require the permission of the land owner to move water onto their land, creates a risk around water trading.
- Protection of GDE principles
  - Not necessarily a sound ecological basis for these principles.
  - Setbacks only apply to new bores or new plantations, not replacements so is only managing additional impacts not existing impacts.
  - Setback distance haven't necessarily been used to best advantage in relation to groundwater dependent ecosystems and reductions – clear fell and subsequent reductions could have been designed to occur next to GDEs to make them have a more meaningful impact for the GDEs.
  - No setback for farm forestry.

## SAG DECISION

None.

## Specialised Principles

Liz Perkins provided an overview of the principles specific to certain industries or types of extraction.

Key Points:

- Pulp and paper mill principle – time dependent, principles have ceased to have effect. But was noted other superior legislation may allow for industry expansion.
- Mining, Petroleum and Geothermal
  - Plan intent followed intent of the Water for Good statement.
  - Feedback from Energy and Mining information session was intent of plan wasn't clear up front – some indication in the front of the Plan that water was available but only when looking at principles were the condition on that water clear.
  - Feedback from Energy and Mining information session also indicated that there may be very few instances where water can be returned to the aquifer.
  - No significant feedback raised other than agreement mining should be required to source water in the same way other industries are required to source water (trade and transfer).
- Public water supply
  - SA Water:
    - Will be a review of population projections and can provide these to support the Plan review.
    - SA Water incorporate climate outlook into their projections and use RCP 4.5 as low range outlook for climate change and 8.5 for high range.
    - Spoke to unconfined water being preferable in some instance from an end user perspective, confined considered a backup/last resort.
    - Have purchased additional water and looking at additional bores fields to support Mount Gambier. Considerable cost to undertake connection of new sources of water.
    - Are looking to undertake some modelling, may also be possible for this to support the Plan review.
  - Raised that in last review there was water sitting in Benara that could be taken up for SA Water to support Mount Gambier. SA Water raised that they have been obtaining additional licences to support their requirements and see this as sufficient, plus costs associated with piping water are considerable and Benara may not be suitable as a location.
- Aquaculture
  - Principles were to support conversion to volumetric, no longer having effect.
  - Question raised around how aquaculture managed their used water. Combination of principles in the Plan around tail water and role of the Environment Protection Authority (EPA).
- Rotational crops
  - Discussed that these principles are utilised by and important to the relevant industries.
  - Industry indicated these principles could be simplified, are quite complicated to understand – could be updated in amendment.
  - Some concerns raised at what the additional take through rotational crop principles might mean for groundwater dependent ecosystems.

**SAG DECISION**

None.

### **Other Business**

Prior to close of meeting a very brief discussion around insufficient resourcing within DEW to support water allocation plans. It was discussed that additional resourcing has been sourced through accelerated funding and this is supporting additional hydrogeologists to undertake LLC modelling. DEW have been unsuccessful recruiting a hydrogeologist to the region. It was also reiterated that in alignment with the National Water Initiative South Australia is implementing a user-pays system so additional resourcing may come at a cost to water licence holders.

### **Close of meeting**

Meeting closed at 3:00 pm.

The Chair thanked the stakeholders and staff for attending.

CONFIRMED

## Lower Limestone Coast WAP Stakeholder Advisory Group Action Table

Action	LLC WAP Stakeholder Advisory Group Actions	Status	Meeting 6 Update
1.1	Provide an overview of the Science Review process, outcomes and the work that has occurred since then at Meeting 2.	Ongoing	Summary of current status of work addressing recommendations presented. Further updates will be provided as needed.
1.2	LC Landscape Board Staff to provide relevant papers on the project portal for Stakeholder Advisory Group members to access	Ongoing	Papers provided. Ongoing operating procedure for the Group.
1.5	Convey stakeholder concerns around the Australian Rare Earths Limited development to the LC Landscape Board Governing Body.	Complete	Mining principles were presented and key points from stakeholder information session with Energy and Mining stakeholders were presented.
2.2	Session in future meeting on Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems to assist with stakeholder clarity.	Ongoing	To occur in July, meeting 8
2.4	Provide summary report that takes recommendations from the Plan and places them against actions that have been undertaken.		

### Action Table – Closed Items

Action	LLC WAP Stakeholder Advisory Group Actions	Status
2.6	Arrange a presentation from industry representatives around how useful they have found the different licencing components and how they have used them in their businesses.	Complete
2.1	Provision of presentation, provision of reports from presentation	Complete
2.3	Paddock Tree report to be provided on the project portal.	Complete
2.5	Arrange a presentation from DEW Water Licencing on licencing components and their experiences and perspectives as the body that administers them.	Complete
1.3	Ground rules to be drafted and provided back to group	Complete
1.4	LC Landscape Board Staff prepare recommendation for the LC Landscape Board Governing Body on behalf of the Stakeholder Advisory Group. Recommendation to be considered by the LC Landscape Board Governing Body at its 28 October 2022 Meeting.	Complete

## Lower Limestone Coast WAP Stakeholder Advisory Group Decision Register

Issue	Meeting	Decision
Farm forestry	Meeting 5	The Stakeholder Advisory Group recommends that the Limestone Coast Landscape Board undertakes a review of the farm forestry principles and its risks and benefits.
Forestry principles	Meeting 5	The Stakeholder Advisory Group recommends that the Limestone Coast Landscape Board undertakes a review of the assumptions that underpin the deemed rate. Review should consider available lines of evidence to inform the deemed rate.
Licensing components principles	Meeting 4	The Stakeholder Advisory Group recommends that the Limestone Coast Landscape Board undertakes a comprehensive review of the principles for licensing components to determine if amendment is required. Review should look at whether the principles could be simplified but must also consider risks to the environment or primary producers that changes could introduce. Review should also consider opportunities such as environmental allocations.
Volumetric conversion and bridging volume principles	Meeting 2	Recommend that the LC Landscape Board remove the volumetric conversion and bridging volume principles from the water allocation plan under amendment.
Representativeness of Group	Meeting 1	Group agreement that a nomination should be sought from hardwood plantation forestry for representation on the Stakeholder Advisory Group.