

Lower Limestone Coast WAP Stakeholder Advisory Group Minutes

Meeting No. 9, 17 August 2023, 10:30 am – 3:00 pm

Chardonnay Lodge, Coonawarra

Objectives:

- Learn about wetland restoration and groundwater and its role in water resource management
- Consider social perspectives on resource condition and environmental implications
- Learn about the National Water Grid Authority and MAR projects and their role in water resource management
- Learn more about adaptive management frameworks through reviewing the Padthaway Water Allocation Plan adaptive management framework (deferred to next meeting)
- Hear about feedback from the information sessions that have been held
- Start recapping the Stakeholder Advisory Group recommendations.

Attendees:

Attendees: Penny Schulz (Chair), Pete Bissell (Chair), Wayne Hancock, James Prescott, Melissa Herpich, Belinda Williamson, Claire Harding, Claire Davies, Darren Shelden, Kerry DeGaris, Peter Balnaves, Terry Buckley, Alan Rossouw, Graeme Hamilton, Kylie Boston.

LC Landscape Board Staff: Steve Bourne (Chair), Sue Botting, Liz Perkins, Ryan Judd, Chelsea Burns.

Apologies: Nick Hillier, Michelle Irvine.

Welcome and agenda

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

Minutes

Feedback on Meeting 8 minutes – discussion around nitrogen in groundwater wasn't specific to Ewens Ponds but was around groundwater generally. With current heading of Ewens Ponds it may be perceived the discussion was specific to Ewens Ponds. Heading has been adjusted to: Nitrogen in groundwater.

Minutes from Meeting 8 were confirmed as true and correct. Moved by: Kylie Boston. Seconded by: Jim Prescott. All were in favour.

Social perspectives on resource condition and environmental implications

Jim Prescott provided a presentation on social perspectives on resource condition and environmental implications.

Key Points:

- Equity is an unfortunate term, equity is between people not between people and resources. GDEs need water there is no equity question.
- Ecologically sustainable development – object and principles of the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*.
- Peak Water

- Optimal division between environment and industry – what would be optimal?
- Humans have been eating into the natural capital/water.
- Equity and fairness
 - Recognise the problem
 - Act on the best advice
 - Promote appropriate levels of research and monitoring – more is needed.
- If we do something about our water we can have a huge impact in comparison to what we can achieve around.
- More money should be spent on research and monitoring given the importance of the source.

Discussion:

- How was recharge calculated? Water fluctuation method is a standard and recognised method for recharge calculation.
- Representative across the whole area? Yes average out across the bores used.
- The data used to underpin recharge in the plan – some of this data comes from the 1970s – not the 2013 data
- Myth of “free water” – there wasn’t a gifting of free water – it was a splitting on one entity into to – land and water – industry were given the water they needed to carry on their business.
 - In 70s when you bought land it was assumed you could use all the water under your land – this has changed.
- Our knowledge and technology is increasing – our ability to produce sustainably is increasing. Farmers need to go on with being the best farmers they can be – this is the most important task.
- Not tending to save water but getting more product for the same amount of water.
- What are the methodologies to address the problems – what is happening in other places that could be applied here? Would a presentation on this be useful?
 - When water licence holders are fined the money goes in to a State fund
 - This is a step for amendment.
- There is a lot of focus and resource spent on the River Murray and the Coorong and water is always talked about there but not in relation to the Limestone Coast – even though Limestone Coast allocates more water – there is an inequity in focus around water.
- Best place in history to address water challenges, as long as we understand what we’re doing – we have technology and data that can help us get ourselves out of this situation - things can be achieved now that couldn’t be achieved 30 years ago.

Wetland restoration and groundwater

Melissa Herpich provided a presentation on wetland restoration and groundwater and its role in water resource management.

Key Points:

- Hutt Bay restoration
 - Drainage backfill
 - SA Water reuse trial
 - Supportive neighbouring landholders – provided it stays within the desired area
 - Monitoring
 - It is good to see the water from the treatment plan being used and would be good to see this practice expanded including using other small waste water treatment plants associated with smaller towns in the region.

- Mount Burr Swamp
 - Drainage backfill
 - Monitoring
 - Carbon potential is tied to water
 - Benefits to holding water in landscape are many and varied.

National Water Grid Authority and MAR projects

Sue Botting provided an overview of other water resource management projects being undertaken by the LC Landscape Board. This presentation won't be available online as work is preliminary and for information only in the presentation.

Key Points:

- National Water Grid Authority – Commonwealth funding.
- Limestone Coast Groundwater modelling update.
- Managed Aquifer Recharge study
 - Flow curves
 - More factors to consider if actually undertaking managed aquifer recharge but factors considered provide a first cut
 - Didn't take into account climate change.
- Drainage Adaptation
 - Quantifying value of different water uses
 - Current and future water availability
 - Groundwater and wetland modelling
 - Seawater intrusion risks
 - 7 new wells have continuous loggers put in place.

Discussion:

- Managed aquifer recharge
 - It is not as simple as it seems – water isn't necessarily where or when you want it
 - Once drainage water has reached the coast likely interacting with groundwater
 - Time will come when the cost/benefit aligns for piping water over distances to be feasible but not there yet – demand not driving it yet.
- Drainage adaptation
 - Quantifying value of different water uses
 - Research is an early first step, will do the basics and generate further questions to investigate
 - Modelling will provide a demand value for water for the different uses, drivers of water demand.
 - Seawater intrusion risks
 - Is the image shared from the AEM showing the karst feature, parallel or perpendicular to the coast?
 - Perpendicular to the coast and RHS of image was closest to the sea, LHS was inland.
 - If areas are identified as saline with this study – how do we know how long that has been there? We don't, they could have existed at that point for a very long

time and may not be a problem, but provides a baseline to compare to into the future. Provides the best picture of where risk might be now.

- How deep is the confined at the coast? Depth of confined aquifer and thickness varies. South Coast it starts around 250m – 300m deep.
- When will this work be complete? Project end is due early 2025.
- Request for presentation on other mechanisms that may provide for environmental water.

Stakeholder Sessions

Liz Perkins provided an overview of the stakeholder information sessions.

Key Points:

- Outline of key topics and feedback from information sessions held to date.

Discussion:

- Pines planted in a line from Donovans all along the border that is preventing recharge directly above Pic Ponds that could be impacting Pic Ponds discharge. But pines have been planted for a very long time prior to the issue at Pic Ponds.
- Can Ramsar values be used as resource condition triggers?
- Environment and conservation have not been represented in the past and have only just started to begin to play in this water management space.
- After these sessions was there much difference between the discussions and concerns raised in comparison to the SAG meetings? No – sessions are raising similar concerns and queries.
- Environment information session – surprising the people that were not there. It's not well understood that these assets are groundwater dependent.
- Dryland farms - keep having to deepen bores. Could look at bore depths for dryland areas.

Stakeholder Advisory Group Recommendations

Liz Perkins led a discussion recapping the recommendations from the Stakeholder Advisory Group.

Key Points:

- Looking at the overview of recommendations put forward and whether the Group is happy recommendations reflect their input.

Discussion:

- Need to look further than 10 years for the amendment of the Plan as this should be a plan that looks forward 50 years.
- Middle ground for the environment and productivity, there should a recommendation that the Board needs to try determine this.
- Can the LC Landscape Board investigate and clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Board and the EPA and if there are gaps?
- Influence of water quantity and use on water quality – high nutrients and low discharge/flushing is worst case scenario.
- Increasing interest in effluent and nutrient management by industry audits – avoidance of duplication or other challenges for licence holders.

SAG DECISION

That the Lower Limestone Coast Water Allocation Plan moves to amendment.

Other Business

- The LC Landscape the Board may add in a recommendation as to whether monitoring and measuring of the resource was sufficient as adaptive management hooks into that.

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 9 Update
8.1	LC Landscape Board Staff to provide information on results from water values survey	Ongoing	Scheduled for Meeting 10
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.
2.4	Provide summary report that takes recommendations from the Plan and places them against actions that have been undertaken.		
2.7	Request for 10 year timescale (of the plan) resource condition trends for sharing more broadly with interested stakeholders	Ongoing	

Action Table – Closed Items

Action	LLC WAP Stakeholder Advisory Group Actions	Status
2.2	Session in future meeting on Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems to assist with stakeholder clarity.	Complete
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
1.5	Convey stakeholder concerns around the Australian Rare Earths Limited development to the LC Landscape Board Governing Body.	Complete

Lower Limestone Coast WAP Stakeholder Advisory Group Decision Register

Issue	Meeting	Decision
Review process	Meeting 9	That the Lower Limestone Coast Water Allocation Plan moves to amendment.
Groundwater dependent ecosystems	Meeting 8	The Stakeholder Advisory Group recommends the LC Landscape Board review the GDE protection principles in amendment of the current Plan.
Groundwater dependent ecosystems	Meeting 8	The Stakeholder Advisory Group recommends the LC Landscape Board investigate adaptive management in amendment of the Plan that includes ecological thresholds relevant to GDEs.
Drainage authorisations	Meeting 8	The Stakeholder Advisory Group recommends that where drain water is demonstrated to be groundwater, an application to extract drainage water should be subject to the same principles and requirements as groundwater extraction is under the LLC water allocation plan (e.g. hydro test).
Water market	Meeting 7	<p>The Stakeholder Advisory Groups recommends that the LC Landscape Board, through amendment of the Lower Limestone Coast Water Allocation Plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Include mechanisms that ensure movement of water onto a land parcel requires land owner permission.
Trades and transfers	Meeting 7	<p>The Stakeholder Advisory Groups recommends that the LC Landscape Board, through amendment of the Lower Limestone Coast Water Allocation Plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Develop a single set of objectives for managing the resource that applies to the entire Plan, rather than separate objectives for each section. 7. Allow conversion and transfer of a forestry licence to a water (taking) licence.

Confined aquifer	Meeting 7	<p>The Stakeholder Advisory Groups recommends that the LC Landscape Board, through amendment of the Lower Limestone Coast Water Allocation Plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Retain Objective 8.1 a) specified in the current Plan which is to: "cautiously manage the confined aquifer so that it may continue to be available for the social, economic and environmental needs of current and future generations." 4. Review current allocation in the confined aquifer and assess the risks in relation to that level of allocation. 5. Consider mechanisms to adaptively manage the confined aquifer resource.
Target management levels	Meeting 7	<p>The Stakeholder Advisory Groups recommends that the LC Landscape Board, through amendment of the Lower Limestone Coast Water Allocation Plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the use of total available recharge as the basis for sustainable water management. 2. Consider mechanisms to adaptively manage the resource.
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.