

Tindall Mataranka to Daly Waters Water Advisory Committee  
*Meeting Record 1*

*19 July 2017 – 10.30am*  
*Conference Room, Giles Street, Katherine*

**Members Present**

Rebecca Mohr-Bell  
Peter Rix  
Sharon Hillen  
Clair O'Brien  
Sarah Kerin  
David Crook  
Kylie Gracey

Independent Chair  
Quintis, Water Extraction Licence Holder  
Roper Gulf Regional Council  
Regenerative Agriculture  
Department of Tourism and Culture  
Research Scientist, CDU  
Proxy for Tracey Hayes, NT Cattlemen's Association

By telephone

Kane Younghusband  
Helena Lardy  
Jocelyn James  
Kerry Roberts

Horticulturist, Water Extraction Licence holder  
Jilkminggan Community Aboriginal Association  
Jilkminggan Community Aboriginal Association  
Jilkminggan Community Aboriginal Association

**Members Absent**

David Ciaravolo  
Vin Lange

Amateur Fishermen's Association of the Northern Territory  
TopEnd Farm

**Advisors Present**

Simon Cruickshank  
Gabby Yates

A/Executive Director, Water Resources, DENR  
Water Planner, DENR

**Observers**

Pru Ducey

DENR, Minutes

## 1. OPENING

Meeting opened at 10.30am

### 1.1. Apologies

David Ciaravolo	Amateur Fishermen's Association of the Northern Territory
Vin Lange	TopEnd Farm
Rick Fletcher	Northern Land Council (Proxy for Vin Lange)

### 1.2. Introduction from the Chair

The Chair Rebecca Mohr-Bell introduced herself and outlined her role as the Independent Chair.

### 1.3. Committee member Introductions

Each member introduced themselves and outlined their interest in being part of the Committee.

The DENR A/Executive Director Water Resources, Simon Cruickshank thanked everyone for their nominations and willingness to be part of this Committee, and assured members the Committee has the Department's support. Outcomes are influential and can have significant impact on work the Department undertakes. The Committee can request expert guidance, and the Department has a number of staff that can make presentations and provide background information.

Today's meeting will include some scene setting, discussion of the terms of reference and how the Committee works together. Gabby will outline the planning process, and members will have the opportunity to discuss, ask questions and raise issues.

## 2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference outline the Committee's role and responsibilities.

The Committee is made up of a diverse range of people who are appointed by the Minister to provide advice to the Department. Members are appointed in recognition of the contribution they can make to water Planning because of their experience, knowledge and capacity to represent a stakeholder group. It is expected that members attend meetings in the interests of the Community at large and that they share information with the community and their stakeholder group.

Some key items discussed were:

- Members who do not attend three consecutive meetings may have their membership reviewed. It is okay to send a proxy but it is preferred where possible the same proxy attends each meeting when the member can't attend to ensure consistency.

- The Chairperson is the primary media spokesperson for the Committee. If a member is approached for comment by the Media, they are advised to contact the Chair about the request before providing comment.
  - The Chairperson will ensure that accurate reporting of the advice and recommendations of the Committee is provided to the Department.
  - The Committee does not have to reach consensus on issues, meeting Minutes should document differing views where they occur.
  - The role of the Department is to provide support to the Committee including meeting resources, information and advice, and frame options for the Committee's consideration.
  - After approval at the following meeting, meeting Minutes will be uploaded to the Department's website <https://denr.nt.gov.au/land-resource-management/water-resources/water-allocation-plans/tindall-mataranka-daly-waters-water-allocation-plan>
  - Meetings will be closed, however some public meetings will be held
- ❖ *ACTION: Chair/Planner will send members 4 to 5 main dot points reflecting the main points of discussion soon after the meeting, even if the minutes aren't finalised.*
- ❖ *ACTION: Planner to provide members with a copy of the Water Act, and information on the amount of water allocated for existing licences and the number of pending licence applications for the water resource.*

### **3. PLANNING OUR WORK – DISCUSS DRAFT PLAN OF WORK**

Committee members were provided with two documents:

- A draft plan of work that will guide the work of the Department and the Committee over the next 12 to 18 months.
- A Background brief document providing an overview of the water allocation planning area and the future planning process. This document is available on the DENR website: <https://denr.nt.gov.au/land-resource-management/water-resources/water-allocation-plans/tindall-mataranka-daly-waters-water-allocation-plan>. The Background briefing contains information on the Plan boundary and why these boundaries were selected. The first reading of this document may seem overwhelming but there will be a number of people coming to talk to the Committee about elements in this document.

One Committee member queried what had happened to previous drafting of a Water Allocation Plan for the Tindall Limestone Aquifer, Mataranka.

- Between 2009 and 2012 a draft water allocation plan was developed with significant effort from the Department and Stakeholders. This draft Plan was never finalised. A Plan can only come into effect when it has been declared by the Minister.
- Since 2012 a number of licences have been issued and land and water suitability assessment has been undertaken in the Larrimah area. The Department decided to extend the planning area due to the potential for agricultural development in the Larrimah area, and in consideration of the potential long term effects of this development on Roper River flows. Relevant reports can be found here:

<http://www.territorystories.nt.gov.au/handle/10070/259526> and  
<http://www.territorystories.nt.gov.au/handle/10070/259527>

- When the draft plan was prepared, a significant amount of work was undertaken on hydrology, hydrogeology, and social and cultural values. This work is still relevant in developing the new water allocation plan.

Gabby Yates provided an overview of water allocation planning activities in the Katherine Region:

- 3 Water Allocation Plan areas
- 3 Water Advisory Committees
- Katherine (Tindall Limestone Aquifer) Water Allocation Plan was declared in 2009, has a lifespan of 10 years, and was reviewed during 2015. The Plan expires in 2019.
- Ooloo Dolostone Aquifer Water Allocation Plan is in the final stages of preparation, and it is hoped the plan will be completed in late 2017.
- Tindall Mataranka – Daly Waters Water Allocation Plan is in the early preparation stage and it is hoped the plan will be completed by September 2018.

Discussion included:

- The Committee may want to have a standing agenda item to receive an update on the progress of the Ooloo Plan as this will help them learn about the water allocation planning process.
- Whilst the Plan area covers only the Tindall Limestone Aquifer within the Roper River catchment, the rules and water management strategies of the plan will need to consider the downstream requirements of the Roper River, and the flows that need to be maintained.
- Committee members asked about whether petroleum and gas developments and mining are exempt from requiring a water extraction licence. Water Resources are currently undertaking a review of the NT Water Act to include water licencing for mining and petroleum activities in the Northern Territory. Currently, the NT Water Act exempts such activities. It is intended that mining and petroleum activities will be required to apply for water extraction licences in the near future.
- Noted request that Jilkminggan be shown on the various maps.
- Noted that Roper Gulf Shire Council holds two meetings a year with the communities throughout the catchment and these meetings could be an opportunity to provide information about water allocation planning to the community.
- Committee name is Mataranka to Daly Waters Water Advisory Committee. Open to suggestions to amend the name, however the Minister would need to make any changes to the name.

#### **4. CHALLENGES AND LEARNING FROM THE PAST**

Committee members asked whether they could have a copy of the previously drafted Water Allocation Plan. The Department will provide the Committee with the draft, however, the planning process should not be seen as an editing exercise. Planning will need to consider all the relevant issues afresh. A summary of the main questions that should be considered is provided in the background brief.

There has been an ongoing program of monitoring and assessment so our knowledge has improved since that draft plan was developed. Additionally, there has been policy development that will influence the rules and strategies of the Plan.

The Committee identified the following challenges for water allocation planning in the region:

- Assessing the Sustainable Yield for the aquifer – long-term and seasonal variability
- Uncertainty in understanding environmental and cultural outcomes and water requirements and developing an appropriate response recognising uncertainty

The committee requested information and/or presentations about the following:

- Overview on the Policy development work that the Department is undertaking or has recently completed, particularly in the last few years
- Information about petroleum and gas development and mining in the region and how this fits into water allocation planning
- Progress of other water allocation plans in the region
- Information about proposed surface water licensing or developments in the Roper River catchment
- Overview of Roper River catchment hydrogeology and modelling
- Overview of Roper River catchment groundwater and surface water monitoring
- Summary presentation of the Larrimah Land and Water Suitability Study
- Future Climate in the Roper River catchment and hydrology under future climate e.g. CSIRO catchment yields project findings
- Overview of the Mapping the future work program – are any of the project areas within the Plan area?
- Copy of the NT Water Allocation Framework
- Overview of water extraction licences granted and applications pending in the Roper River catchment

The Planner and the Chair will discuss how best to get this information out to members over the next few meetings. Information will be staged so it is not overwhelming.

## **5. NEXT MEETING**

Date to be advised.

Committee commented that meeting times between 10.30am and 1.00pm are good for Committee members travelling to and from Darwin.

To maintain momentum, the Committee will have a meeting in September building on background information, and understanding the beneficial uses (values) of the aquifer.

The Chair will send out some proposed meeting dates for feedback.

**Meeting Closed 1.05pm**