

Berry Springs water advisory committee: summary of meeting 3

Date: Wednesday 8 May 2024

Time: 1.00 pm to 3.30 pm

Location: Sturt Plateau Meeting Room, 25 Chung Wah Terrace and via Microsoft teams

Attendance			
Initials	Name	Position	Representation
RW	Russell Willing	Chair	Independent
DB	Doug Barden	Member	Litchfield council
PJ	Phillipa Johnson	Member	Irrigated horticulture
LS	Leonidas Skliros	Member	Irrigated horticulture
DL	David Liddle	Member	Environmental interests
HB	Hilary Bloomfield	Proxy	Northern Land Council
Department Environment, Parks and Water Security staff:			
AD	Amy Dysart	Presenter	Executive Director, Water Resources
JS	Jamey Shannon	Minutes	Senior Project Officer, Water Resources
AA	Andrew Applegate	Presenter	Water Regulation Officer, Water Resources
LF	Laura Fletcher	Presenter	Water Regulation Officer, Water Resources
Apologies			
Initials	Name	Position	Representation
BR	Bill Risk	Member	Aboriginal interests, Larrakia
RS	Rena Stanton	Member	Aboriginal interests, Kungarakan
BVL	Bridie Velik-Lord	Member	Northern Land Council
SF	Simon Ferguson	Member	Territory Wildlife Park, NTG

1. Meeting open and attendance

Meeting commenced at 1.03 pm

1.1 Welcome, attendance and acknowledgement of country

Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and completed the acknowledged country.

The agenda was confirmed. Members confirmed they had received and reviewed committee papers.

Chair noted the apologies, confirmed the meeting quorum.

1.2 Conflicts of interest and confidentiality

Phillipa Johnson declared she is now a small mango grower and the committee agreed this didn't change Phillipa's ability to represent irrigated agriculture

1.3 Previous minutes

Committee members received minutes of meeting 2 on 10 November 2023 for review and were given until 19 January 2024 to provide feedback. Minutes were updated with member feedback and approved by the Chair. Minutes were published on the DEPWS Berry Springs Water Advisory Committee website and the committee advised on 7 February 2024. No further changes were requested by the committee

during the meeting. Leo Skliros advised that he thought the previous meeting leaned too heavily toward environmental issues without equal consideration to the issues restricting opportunities for more productive water use.

2. Presentations and discussions

2.1 Presentation by Water Resources on Rural Stock and Domestic use

Water Resources Water Regulation Officer presented an overview of the Rural Stock and Domestic use. Copy of the presentation was provided to the committee prior to the meeting.

Key messages included:

- overview of the *Water Act 1992*, outlining the statutory rights of owners/occupiers to access and take water for stock and domestic purposes
- overview of Darwin Rural Stock and Domestic allocations
- breakdown the water use within the Berry Springs water allocation plan area
- Darwin metering project 2008 – 2011, out of 100 meters installed for the project 92 were in the Darwin rural water Control district, 9 from the Berry Springs Dolomite aquifer area, with a typical yield of 5 L/s
- current review – data from Power and Water on bores and reticulated water networks.

2.2 Discussion and questions

The committee discussed the data and various consideration for estimating domestic water use in the plan area. While it was acknowledged the data is limited all indications are the estimations of 3.5 ML/year per property are sufficiently conservative to represent the unlicensed use at this time.

2.3 Presentation by Water Resources on the Darwin Rural Water Regulation Strategy

Water Resources Water Regulation Officer presented an update on the Darwin Rural Water Regulation Strategy. Copy of the presentation was provided to the committee prior to the meeting.

Key messages included:

- overview of the Darwin Rural Water Regulation Strategy
- legislative reforms
- recalibration of allocations
- regulation of unlawful water use
- recovery of unused water extraction licence entitlements

2.4 Discussion and questions

The committee discussed that the major focus for the management of the resources has been the legislative changes as the first step to get all water uses in the regulation and understanding the water balance for the resource, which is underway until August 2025.

2.5 Presentation by Water Resources on the Berry Springs State of the Water Resource 2022-23

Water Resources Executive Director discussed the [status report](#) that was recently published presented to the committee in meeting 2 in November 2023.

Key messages included:

- updates to the layout and format of the draft that was presented to the committee in November 2023

- state of the water resource reports for each water allocation plan area will be completed on an annual basis with Berry Springs and Katherine reports both now published now for the 2022-23 period
- Each state of the resource report contains updates on water allocation and usage, rainfall data, creek flow data, groundwater levels, water licencing and compliance statistics, recently completed activities and key priorities for the future.

2.6 Discussion and questions

The committee discussed ways that the status report may be promoted, making it available on notice boards in the area using a QR code, members sharing through their networks as well as social media. One member raised that the report may be improved in future with traffic light reporting with similar structure to the Darwin Harbour report card and additional information on the Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems (GDEs) would be useful, which the department will consider in the next version of the report.

Action 15: Send the committee a link to where the [status report](#) is published on the website.

Action 16: Members to share the [status report](#) with their networks.

Action 17: The department will review the communication strategy and consider the QR made being available on notice boards in the plan area to access the status report.

Action 18: The department will provide a presentation at the next committee meeting on the groundwater dependent ecosystems (GDE's) work.

Afternoon tea break

2.7 Action list

The department provided an update on the actions register.

The committee discussed and reinforced the importance of reticulated water supply to Berry Springs and South Port as a priority for members. While responsibility is outside Water Resources, ways to progress were discussed and that a number of different approaches would be most influential. The Darwin water supply strategy and investment in additional infrastructure in the region may assist the feasibility. The Manton Dam return to service project is currently underway with Stage 1 of the Strauss Water Treatment Plant underway as part of this project.

Action 19: The department to liaise with Power and Water – Land Service/Land Planning teams regarding any future proposals for reticulated water supply to the Berry Springs area.

Action 20: The department will arrange a briefing on the Darwin Water Supply project out of session or at the next meeting.

2.8 Signage in the Berry Springs area

The department raised that a letter to the editor article in the NT News of “Water is life” earlier in the year. The committee discussed options to improve information for tourists about the fill and spill aquifer and the plan.

The committee discussed the constraints pertaining to land development related activities in the Berry Springs area. There seems to be more weight around water conservation, however further considerations should also be taken in to account when it comes to future developments in the plan area. There was discussion that water is drying up around the place, in particular that there is new infrastructure along Kentish Road, which could possibly be having an impact of how long water is staying at the surface. The committee did note however that Berry Creek is still flowing and it is now May.

The committee reinforced the focus on understanding the water requirements to maintain the springs and groundwater dependent ecosystems (GDE's), especially what is the threshold where lower aquifers will

have detrimental impacts. There was some discussion about a lack of science on GDE's outside of the springs area.

There was discussion around the inclusion and engagement of Aboriginal people in the committee and that it would be beneficial to look in to strategies and activities for further input in to the committee.

Action 21: Meet with Aboriginal representatives to discuss the committees response to the NT News article "water is life" and proposal for Berry Springs signage.

2.9 Next meeting

Committee advised that they would like to meet 6 monthly with the next meeting in November 2024.

4.2 Closing comments

The Chair thanked members for their input throughout the meeting.

Meeting closed at 3.53 pm

Actions register

Actions items arising from meeting 1				
No.	Action	Action officer	Comments	Status
1	Work program and schedule to be revised and send to members for further feedback	WRD/Chair	Review complete – Department will reset the schedule for the committee from until expiry of the plan Aug 2026. At meeting in May 2024 agreed meetings will be 6 monthly	Completed
2	Information to be developed that clearly explains that the use of the resource is exceeding the consumptive pool	WRD	Review report outline current statistics – noting that legislative changes will complete the transition of previously exempt users into regulatory framework	Completed
3	Topics identified to be addressed at meeting 2:			
	a. The potential for a reticulated water supply to minimise pressure on the resource	WRD	Further discussion at next meeting about estimating domestic use will inform the additional water that may be available	Completed
	b. The need for greater clarification between Aboriginal cultural water and other defined cultural uses of water	WRD	Part of the new structure of water allocation plans is clearer on this to be adopted in the new plan	Next plan
	c. Water use volumes, comparison of licensed vs unlicensed and breakdown by beneficial use and how these are determined, especially with regard to stock and domestic consumption estimates	WRD	Review report outline current statistics – noting that legislative changes will complete the transition of previously exempt users into regulatory framework	Completed
	d. How the Department intends to manage unlicensed use in the Darwin water control district	WRD	The 2023 legislative changes and the Darwin rural water regulation strategy 2023-26 - progress reported to the committee annually	Completed
	e. Relationship between groundwater level and springflow	WRD	Presentation on the modelling demonstrating predictions and results with high correlation	Completed
	f. Description of how longer term climate datasets will be used to determine the impact on the estimated sustainable yield	WRD	This is an ongoing consideration that is integrated into future plan development	Next plan
	g. Rate of increased stock and domestic use and what is used in existing modelling?	WRD	Review report outline current statistics – noting that legislative changes will complete the transition of previously exempt users into regulatory framework	Completed
h. Opportunity to create a reportcard to engage the community to play a bigger role in making changes to sustain the resource	WRD	In status report published and presented at May 2023 meeting	Completed	

	i. Tools the Department intend to use to improve transparency and knowledge	WRD	Webpages have been updated to be user friendly and provides clear information	Completed
	j. Extent and significance of unlicensed horticultural and cultural (domestic use beyond that permitted under section 14 of the Act) use	WRD	The 2023 legislative changes and the Darwin rural water regulation strategy 2023-26	Underway
	k. Should the Berry Springs and Darwin River catchments be considered as separate resources in the plan?	WRD	This will be considered in the development of the next plan – however considering the relatively small size of the resource this is not likely	Next plan

Actions items arising from meeting 2

No.	Action	Action officer	Comments	Status
4	Provide committee with a copy of the presentation regarding water levels and aquifers in Berry Springs	WRD	CEWRD to source presentation	In progress
5	Provide committee photos of the weir when the resource was dry in the 1950's or 1960s	WRD	CEWRD seeking photos, year may be 1962	In progress
6	Presentation delivered by Manager Water Resources Modelling to be sent to committee members	WRD	CEWRD emailed committee members on 18/12/23	Completed
7	Send the committee full groundwater model graph from the 1960s to date	WRD	CEWRD emailed committee members on 18/12/23	Completed
8	Study undertaken by Peter Jolly in 2000 to be sent to the committee	WRD	CEWRD emailed committee members on 18/12/23	Completed
9	Email members a copy of the 2022-2023 state of the water resource report for Berry Springs	WRD	CEWRD emailed committee members on 18/12/23	Completed
10	Committee to receive a copy of the link to the water licence portable for the Berry Springs region which shows both groundwater and surface water licences	WRD	CEWRD emailed link on 28/11/2023	Completed
11	Presentation to the committee on a review of stock and domestic use	WRD	Presentation will be delivered at meeting 3	Completed
12	Update the implementation actions in the review report: a. 1.2.4: the annual state of the water resource is educational material and this should be included in the KPIs	WRD/CDM Smith	In KPI for the Department budget appropriations Review report updated	Complete
	b. 1.3.1: there needs to be an understanding of the ecosystems and environmental values before you can monitor the resource	WRD/CDM Smith	Highest priority for water advisory committee and reflected in review report Review report updated	Complete

	c. 1.3.2: clarify how groundwater dependent ecosystems are defined	WRD/CDM Smith	GDE mapping is underway Review report updated	Complete
	d. 1.4.1: KPI should be updated to reflect Aboriginal cultural site of value and cultural values and include identification and documentation	WRD/CDM Smith	More specific and achievable actions added to actions in review report	Complete
13	WRD to seek opportunities encourage research in Berry Springs Environmental Flow requirements	WRD	Being progress as part of the Territory Water Plan - Accelerated water science program	On-going
14	WRD to liaise with other relevant agencies to identify the importance of seeking alternative water supplies to enable development of proposed urbanisation and high intensity uses in the Berry Springs District Centre	WRD	Discuss at next meeting to determine action	Complete

Action items arising from meeting 3

No.	Action	Action officer	Comments	Status
15	Send the committee a link to where the status report is published on the website.	WRD	Link: 2022-23 State of the Water Resource report	Completed
16	Members to share the status report with their networks.	WRD	Update by members at next meeting	In progress
17	The department will review the communication strategy and consider the QR made being available on notice boards in the plan area to access the status report.	WRD		In progress
18	The department will provide a presentation at the next committee meeting on the groundwater dependent ecosystems (GDE's) work.	WRD	Next meeting Nov 2024	
19	The department to liaise with Power and Water – Land Service/Land Planning teams regarding any future proposals for reticulated water supply to the Berry Springs area.	WRD	Next meeting Nov 2024	
20	The department will arrange a briefing on the Darwin Water Supply project out of session or at the next meeting.	WRD	Out of session online or Next meeting Nov 2024	
21	Meet with Aboriginal representatives to discuss the committees response to the NT News article “water is life” and proposal for Berry Springs signage.	WRD	Before next meeting in Nov 2024	In progress

WRD = Water Resource Division

