

Berry Springs Water Advisory Committee

Minutes of meeting 1

Meeting date: Monday 18 July 2022

Start time: 9.00am

Location: Berry Springs Town Hall and Teams meeting (video)

Papers: Berry WAP Review Summary and proposed BSWAC plan of work

Meeting summary

Actions from meeting 1

1	Department to revise the work program and schedule in conjunction with the Chair and resubmit a revised version to members for further feedback.
2	Department to provide clearer information to demonstrate that use of the resource is exceeding the consumptive pool.
3	Department to provide response to issues identified (item 12) for next meeting.

Meeting record

Item 1. Acknowledgement of country

The Chair provided an Acknowledgement of Country: "We respectfully acknowledge the past and present Traditional Custodians of the land on which we are meeting today and the land which is to be spoken about during this meeting".

Item 2. Opening and welcome

The Chair opened the meeting at 09:10 and welcomed members.

Item 3. Attendance

Attendance and apologies were noted. A quorum was reached.

Members present	Method	Apologies	Department staff	Method
Russell Willing (Chairperson)	Meeting room	Phillipa Johnson*	Simon Cruickshank	Meeting room
David Liddle	Online	Bridie Velik-Lord	Mardi Miles	Meeting room
Bill Risk	Online			
Kate Peake	Meeting room			
Doug Barden	Meeting room			
Rena Stanton	Meeting room			
Simon Ferguson	Meeting Room			
Leonidas Skilros	Meeting Room			

*Simon Cruickshank met with Phillipa Johnson on 16 August to discuss key elements of the plan.

Members introduced themselves, the stakeholders they represent and their interest in water planning related to the Berry Springs area. Rena Stanton and Kate Peake were acknowledged as members of the original Water Advisory Committee (WAC) for the Berry Springs Water Allocation Plan 2016-2026 (current plan). Mardi Miles was acknowledged as the Planner responsible for developing the current plan.

Members were reminded to submit any outstanding paperwork. Please contact the department if there are any further questions regarding remuneration.

Item 4. Declaration of interests

No conflicts of interest declared. It was agreed that if at any point a member thought they might have a conflict of interest they should raise it and it would be considered by the committee immediately.

Item 5. Nominated meeting evaluators

Kate Peake volunteered to be meeting evaluator.

Item 6. BSWAC roles and responsibilities

The Chair talked to the Terms of Reference (ToR) and referred to the NT Government Boards Handbook. Members were reminded of the confidentiality provisions in the ToR, the role of the Chair including acting as the primary media spokesperson, the role of members and the department. Members were informed that it was critical that the committee had a shared understanding of their role as WAC members. The Chair defined these as:

- A. provide advice on the effectiveness of the plan to date, and any changes required to bring it up to date and that the aim was to review the plan not write a new plan
- B. seek stakeholder and community feedback on the effectiveness of the plan.

The Chair summarised the actions required by the Committee as:

1. listen to , analyse and understand
 - a. where progress has and hasn't been made against the plan objectives
 - b. all new information being presented to the committee
2. engage with stakeholder groups regarding any new issues or opportunities
3. identify anywhere the information or objective in the plan need to be updated and why
4. make recommendations that may assist in better achieving outcomes of the plan.

Committee members acknowledged that they agreed with the above objectives and actions.

Committee members were asked to identify any burning issues before we moved to the next agenda item. Some issues were raised and it was agreed to keep a list of issues raised that couldn't be dealt with immediately. These are recorded at item 12.

Item 7. Overview of NT water allocation planning

A presentation was provided to assist members to understand:

- the hierarchy of legislative, policy and planning documents
- location of water control districts (WCDs) and water allocation plans (WAPs)
- how water is allocated in the Northern Territory – the Water Allocation Planning Framework
- how water is shared and prioritised between the non-consumptive uses (environment and culture) and consumptive uses (public water supply, stock and domestic, aboriginal water reserve, industry and agriculture).

Item 8. WAC work plan

The department advised that for the plan to be contemporary and legally enforceable an updated plan was required recognising changes to legislation since declaration of the plan in 2016 and that the primary elements that require updating are:

- legislative changes
- science elements eg. climate and water use data since 2016
- model recalibration outcomes
- feedback from the review process, as per item 6 above.

A proposed WAC work plan and schedule was provided to members for feedback and agreement. The work plan proposed an initial meeting as an induction and overview of the current plan – this meeting. A second meeting to workshop elements described in item 6 above and collate outcomes from the 'Have your say' process and a final meeting to assess the review report and revised draft plan.

Members stated that the work plan was overly ambitious and that at least four meetings are likely to be required. Discussion was also held regarding WAC member availability given mango harvest commencing in September and likely to continue to Christmas.

Action item 1: Department to revise the work program and schedule and re-submit a revised version to members for further feedback.

Item 9. Regulatory reform

The department provided a presentation on amendments to the Water Act 2019 (Act):

- introduction of mining and petroleum activities as beneficial uses and now requiring water extraction licences
- introduction of Aboriginal water reserve
- various updates to administrative processes
- removal of the 15 L/s exemption in the Darwin Rural area.

And policy updates:

- Processing water extraction licence applications policy
- Recovery of unused licensed water entitlements policy
- Stage water extraction licence guidelines
- Trading licensed water entitlements policy

Item 10. BSWAP historic overview

The department provided an overview of the current plan focussing on the technical elements including the description of the resource, land use and tenure, updates to climate and recharge data, the departments groundwater and surface water monitoring network, where and how much water was being taken and reported (licensed and unlicensed).

The department provided data that demonstrated current use exceeded the volume of water allocated to the consumptive pool, as per the plan, most days during the months of August to November since 2016.

The department also stated that monitoring collected during the 2018/19 and 2019/20 low rainfall years has allowed recalibration of the groundwater model and that the recharge value quoted in the plan needs updating.

Members discussed:

- increased consumptive use
- pressure on the resource
- competing interests
- threat to environmental values
- Indigenous connection to the water and landscape across the entire plan area and the region more broadly.

Members expressed that the impact of extraction data was unclear.

Action item 2: Department to provide clearer information to demonstrate that use of the resource is exceeding the consumptive pool.

Item 11. BSWAP review summary

The Berry Springs Water Allocation Plan was declared on 2 August 2016.

The objectives of the Plan are:

1. maintain groundwater levels and water quality sufficient to meet the minimum requirements of current consumptive and environmental uses
2. improve management of the aquifer
3. protect the environment
4. support Aboriginal culture and communities and
5. ensure regional economic development is sustainable.

The department provided an overview of the implementation plan actions and achievements against the targets to date.

Item 12. Issues identified by WAC members

Issues raised during meeting 1 for future discussion or presentation by the department:

- the potential for a reticulated water supply to minimise pressure on the resource
- the need for greater clarification between aboriginal cultural water and other defined cultural uses of water
- 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
- how the department intends to manage unlicensed use in the darwin water control district
- relationship between groundwater level and springflow
- description of how longer term climate datasets will be used to determine the impact on the estimated sustainable yield
- rate of increased stock and domestic use and what is used in existing modelling
- opportunity to create a reportcard to engage the community to play a bigger role in making changes to sustain the resource
- tools does the department intend to use to improve transparency and knowledge
- extent and significance of unlicensed horticultural and cultural (domestic use beyond that permitted under s14 of the act) use

- should the Berry Springs and Darwin River catchments be considered as separate resources in the plan

Action item 3: Department to provide response to issues identified for next meeting.

Item 13. Process from here and next meeting dates

In discussion it was agreed that:

- the department is to revise the proposed work plan based on feedback and present back to committee
- an interim meeting is required prior to the workshop to address information requirements requested by WAC members as per item 12
- further clarification is required to establish which parts of the plan require updating during the review process and how this will occur
- next meeting date to be established out of session after consideration of the items above.

Item 14. Meeting evaluation

The meeting evaluator provided the following feedback:

- the meeting was conducted respectfully and in accordance with the Terms of Reference
- the meeting was managed effectively and that the Chair ensured all participants had opportunity for discussion
- the information provided by the department was appropriate however papers need to be provided earlier
- the venue and facilities were adequate and convenient however better speakers/mic were required for members attending online.

Meeting closed 13:10