

Adelaide River water advisory committee: summary of meeting #9

Date: Wednesday 12 August 2026

Time: 09.20am-12.10pm

Location: Tanami Room, Goyder Centre, Palmerston

Attendance		
Name	Position and representation	Notes
Darryl Day	Independent Chair	
Cherrian Luxton	Member, Community, Environment	
Christine Jenner	Member, Aboriginal, Community, Environment	
David Gray	Member, Agriculture, Community	
Tarizma Kenyon	Member, Aboriginal, Environment, Community, Tourism	9.55am - 11.45am
DLPE staff and Presenters		
Chris Parker	Engagement Officer	
Gayle Grieger	Director, Water Regulation	9.20am - 10.30am
Hannah Small	Committees Project Officer	
Jo Ellis	Director, Water Planning	
Nerida Beard	Executive Director, Water Resources	9.20am - 10.30am
Peter Waugh	Senior Hydrologist	9.20am - 10.30am
Apologies		
Name	Position and representation	Notes
David Ciaravolo	Member, Community, Tourism or Recreation	Apology
Phillip Goodman	Member, Aboriginal, Community	Apology
Peter Shaphert	Member, Agriculture, Tourism or Recreation	Apology
Selena Perrett	Member, Aboriginal, Environment, Community, Tourism	Apology

1. Day 1 Meeting opening and attendance

Meeting commenced at 9.20am.

1.1 Welcome, acknowledgement of country, meeting purpose and evaluation nominee

Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending and noted the apologies.

Chair acknowledged Country and Traditional Custodians.

The Chair nominated a member to complete the meeting evaluation.

1.2 Formalities

The Chair confirmed the agenda and thanked the committee for attending and the department for arranging and presenting the meeting.

There were no conflicts of interest or confidentiality matters declared.

The committee confirmed the previous meeting summary (already published).

The Chair reviewed the actions register and the department provided updates on actions from committee meeting 7 and 8.

Key discussion points

- Action 7.1: The department explained the information provided on the Humpty Doo Barra Farm licence and advised they may be exempt in future due to recent changes made as part of the FastTrack Taskforce recommendations relating to intertidal zones for aquaculture activity.
- Action 7.2 and 7.4: The department provided information on the species and questions the Technical Advisory Panel considered, as well as the species that are being assessed as part of the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure's Environmental Impact Assessment for the Adelaide River Off-Stream Water Storage (AROWS) project.
- Action 7.5: The department provided information on the Regional Monitoring Bore Network installation for AROWS project.
- Action 8.3: The department presented a paper regarding flow rate correlation to river heights at Dirty Lagoon and at Marrakai Road Crossings. Because Dirty Lagoon is tidally influenced when water level is below 6.0m, different flows can relate to the same water level depending upon the state of tide, and timing within the lunar tide cycle. Instead, the department use Dirty Lagoon for total catchment flows where water levels are above 6.0m. Below 6.0m the department calculates flow from two sites, one on the lower Adelaide River and one on the lower Margaret River. Both these sites are above Marrakai crossing and so are above the tidally influenced zone. The combination of flows from these two sites is a good representation of flows at Dirty Lagoon below 6.0m. Committee members queried if flood flows that go around the upstream Marrakai Road gauging sites are taken into consideration. The department advised that due to the terrain it is difficult to ensure all flood 'leakage' is accounted for. As the 'leakage' leads to an underestimate, this makes the allocation of water under the Plan more conservative.
- Action 8.4: The department advised the committee's feedback regarding remuneration has been communicated to the relevant department with responsibility for setting remuneration rates.
- The committee raised concerns that the farming community has doubts that future water licence applications to increase their water extraction would be approved. Some farmers are concerned that expansions may not be financially viable if water isn't available. The department advised that water availability varies across the landscape and that potential applicants should contact the department to discuss their needs.

Action 1: WRD to provide information on licence exemptions following recent gazette (S61 published 16 July) relating to intertidal aquaculture activity.

2. Matters for noting and discussion

2.1 Overview of status of the plan

The department presented an overview of the status of the Adelaide River Water Allocation Plan development and future timeline. The water allocation plan documents will be presented to the committee in November, with the public consultation via *Have Your Say* ready for early December. Feedback received will be reviewed by the department and where appropriate integrated into the plan early in 2027, before the plan documents are prepared for declaration.

The scientific technical reports for the water allocation plan are to be released publicly in the coming months and before Plan release, with targeted communications to accompany them.

Key discussion points:

- The committee noted the updated timeframe for the plan documents.
- The committee discussed the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure community reference group (CRG) for the AROWS project, the overlap between the two projects, and the overlap in members. Some committee members were not fully aware of the membership of the CRG and would like to receive further information on this. The Chair advised there is a requirement for the two groups to be separate, while acknowledging the overlap in projects and members, and that this was the subject of committee discussions at inception. The department noted that the CRG membership is publicly available online¹, and there would be value in noting this routinely for future meetings.
- The committee queried how the feedback from public consultation would be reviewed. The department advised each submission is reviewed by the water planning team. The feedback is split into themes and addressed as required. A summary of the consultation feedback is provided to the committee and also released publicly with the final plan.

Action 2: *Information about the CRG and its make up to be provided to the committee*

Action 3: *Scientific technical reports to be provided to the committee*

Action 4: *Stakeholder feedback on the technical reports received by the department should be reported back to the committee at future committee meetings*

Action 5: *Provide the committee with links to example documents of consultation summaries for the recently declared Katherine water allocation plan 2026-2036 and Alice Springs water allocation plan 2026-2036. Include the one-page summary of themes provided to the Daly River Water advisory committee in relation to the Katherine Plan feedback.*

The Chair agreed to pause item 2.1 for the department to provide a short summary of the recent High Court decision on the Singleton water licence. The case was referred to the High Court on the basis of three elements. The department outlined the three elements and the court's decisions on those, which has resulted in the licence being quashed, and the decision remitted to the Minister for Water Resources for a new decision.

¹ <https://infrastructure.nt.gov.au/project/adelaide-river-off-stream-water-storage>

Key Discussion points:

- Decisions on water licences are independent of Government – through the Controller for Water Resources.
- The committee queried any precedent set for 30-year licences, as it is anticipated that the AROWS project may apply for a 30-year licence in the future. The department noted there are other 30-year licences in the Territory, where special circumstances were justified (public water supply or long-term projects).
- The cultural values work that is being done within the Adelaide River catchment is valuable for the plan. Plans inform future licence decisions where applications are for within the water allocation plan area.

Action 6: *Provide the committee with information on precedents of 30-year water licences.*

Break 10.10am morning tea, restarted 10.35am

2.1 Overview of status of the plan - continued

The department gave an overview of the engagement with Aboriginal family groups from within the Adelaide River catchment. Updates on the plan, Finding the Balance newsletter articles and committee meeting summaries are also circulated via email to approximately 160 stakeholders, which includes the committee members and their families.

The Northern Land Council is leading the engagement on the outcomes of the Cultural Values work completed, and they have advised they will do this opportunistically as part of other scheduled meetings, instead engaging on the Cultural Values separately.

The department played a draft 10-minute voice over presentation for the *Adelaide River Story*. This was requested at committee meeting #8. The department welcomed feedback. The department confirmed the story would be made public once completed.

Key Discussion points:

- The committee valued the Adelaide River Story and highly commended the draft version and advised it was very informative.
- The committee suggested including any information on monitoring of fauna and flora in the catchment and the quality of water, particularly around legacy mines, that rainfall graphs are included, and the context for why the story was developed.
- The committee questioned the wording in the draft video on the water quality of a legacy mine. The department advised they used the 2025 water quality report but would confirm the details and the report date/version.

Action 7: *Provide the water quality report from which information was extracted for the video and confirm the report source for the water quality statements in the Adelaide River Water Story.*

2.2 Path to draft plan finalisation for WAC consideration

The next committee meeting is scheduled for 30 September and 1 October to update the committee on the draft estimated sustainable yield (ESY), the way the Cultural Values work will be incorporated into the

draft plan, and the draft implementation actions.

The following meeting suggested to be early November. The department anticipates the draft plan would be ready for public comment in December.

Key Discussion Points:

- The committee discussed known availability for the forward months and tentatively agreed to 4 November, and potential half day on 5 November, pending availability of committee members' not present.

2.3 Terms of Reference for noting

The department updated the committee's Terms of Reference; they are required to be updated at least every 24 months. The changes are mostly administrative and are based on feedback the committee provided at the meeting #8.

Key discussion points:

- Approval of the Terms of Reference is at the discretion of the Minister for Water Resources; the department will seek the Minister's approval if the committee endorse the updates.
- The committee queried how many meetings could be missed before membership is reviewed. The department advised the terms of reference state after three missed meetings in a row, membership may be reviewed. The process is lengthy and includes giving the member a right of reply. If absences are excusable and if communications have been ongoing, then the membership may not be reviewed after three missed meetings.
- The committee members endorsed the updated Terms of Reference.

2.4 Committee timeline and key decisions

The Chair spoke to the document provided as an overview of the committee membership and the key agenda discussions and decisions the committee has provided input into over the life of the committee. The Chair advised that the document was prepared based on the published committee meeting summaries.

Key discussion points:

- The committee discussed the list of the key items and decisions. The committee agreed that it has been a long journey, and they have had a lot of input. The committee thanked the Chair for the information, noting that it was good to review and remember and have the details in one location.

2.5 Committee Membership

The department provided an overview of the process and estimated timeframe for adding additional members to the committee. The onboarding of new members wouldn't be expected until 2027 - anticipated after the release of the draft Adelaide River water allocation plan.

The department acknowledged the reduced number of Aboriginal members on the committee over time. The department is engaging with family groups via briefings. The department welcomes committee advice on further approaches, in addition to their request for the Expression of Interest (EOI) process to establish interest for new appointments to the committee.

Key discussion points:

- Each step of the process is at the discretion of the Minister for Water Resources.
- The committee queried the ability of the EOI process to address the committee's stated need to add members for under-represented areas of the catchment. The department advised for the process to be fair and equitable the EOI would be made public, but specific communications would be made to target stakeholders to identify and encourage suitable applicants to apply.
- The department is seeking the committee's assistance to identify new members.

2.6 Wrap up and Any Other Business

The Chair facilitated a wrap-up of the meeting, confirming upcoming meeting arrangements.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the meeting, and acknowledged the departments work in facilitating the meeting. The Chair and committee acknowledged the meeting finished slightly earlier than scheduled which was appreciated.

Key discussion points:

- The committee asked that a conflict of interest should be declared by the Chair and members on the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure Community Reference Group for the Darwin Region Water Supply Infrastructure Program (AROWS) at each meeting, which was agreed.
- The department confirmed that, following the meeting, all members will be requested to consider and declare their conflict of interests – perceived or otherwise. The department would send out the relevant documentation to be completed.
- The committee queried how will the rules for pumping be applied. The department advised the water allocation plan will set the rules for the catchment. The Controller of Water Resources will take the plan into consideration when deliberating on water licences decisions.

Action 8: *Provide the committee with conflict of information declaration forms to be completed by every member of the committee, with guidance on what constitutes a conflict of interest.*

2.7 Meeting evaluation

The committee member appointed to conduct the meeting evaluation completed it verbally by referring to a list of what makes a good meeting. The checklist evaluation was not completed due to the committee's preference for more qualitative evaluation format. The evaluator advised the meeting had been a good meeting as there was a clear purpose, active participation, effective time management and that most members left the meeting feeling energised.

Meeting closed at 12.10pm

Actions register Meeting #9			
No.	Action	Action officer	Due date
1	Provide information on licence exemptions following recent gazette (S61 published 16 July) relating to intertidal aquaculture activity.	WRD	
2	Information on DLI Community Reference Group to be provided to the committee	WRD	
3	Full Science technical reports to be provided to the committee	WRD	
4	Stakeholder feedback received on the technical reports should be reported back to the committee at committee meetings	WRD	
5	Provide the committee links to the online documents including the consultation summary for the recently declared Katherine water allocation plan 2026-2036 and Alice Springs water allocation plan 2026-2036. Include the one pager of themes provided to the Daly River water advisory committee in relation to the Katherine Plan feedback.	WRD	
6	Provide the committee with information on 30-year water licences.	WRD	
7	Provide the water quality report from which information was extracted for the video and confirm the report source for the water quality statements in the Adelaide River Water Story.	WRD	
8	Provide the committee with conflict of information declaration forms to be completed by every member of the committee, with guidance on what constitutes a conflict of interest.	WRD	