

Western Davenport Ti Tree Water Advisory Committee

Minutes - Meeting #05

Meeting date: Tuesday 23 August 2022 Start time: 2:00 pm

Location: Teams meeting (video) and Daly Meeting room, Level 3 Goyder Centre

Meeting Summary

The papers were noted as the basis for the Department to prepare the draft water allocation plan (WAP), which would be the focus of our meeting. It was agreed that the Committee would separate its advice into two parts, the first would focus on the draft WAP as presented and identify any concerns or points of further clarification while the second would focus on the social capital and effects of the major licence on the perceived sustainability of the resource. It would also raise the need for a greater degree of confidence that the impacts of this development were not going to be detrimental to the environmental and social character of the WAP area. Members to provide points to assist in the framing of the second part for the next meeting.

Recommendations and Actions

Recommendations from Meeting #05	
5.1	The Department appreciates the time and effort that the Water Advisory Committee to "Provide advice to the Controller and the department on the effectiveness of the Western Davenport plan in maximising the economic and social benefits within ecological constraints". This will be used to inform the drafting of the water allocation plan documents.
5.2	The next WAC meeting will be on the 19 September in which the Department will provide the draft water allocation plan documents that will be ready for public consultation
5.3	Consultation on the 2022 - 2032 plan will start with the session in partnership with CLC in Tennant Creek on the 14 September

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 and welcomed members, proxies and observers.

Item 3. Attendance

Attendance and apologies were noted. A quorum was reached.

Members present	Method	Apologies	Department staff	Method
Andrew Johnson (Chairperson)	Meeting room	Paul Burke	Amy Dysart	Meeting room
Jade Kudrenko	Online	Michael Liddle		
Steve Morton	Online	Barbara Shaw		
Nick Ashburner	Online			
Paul McLaughlin	Online			
Roy Chisholm	Online			
Annette D'Emden	Online			
Roy Chisholm	Phone			
Proxies				
Kate Peake (for Paul Burke)	Online			
Observers			Meeting Secretariat	
Nil			Cherie Jackson	Meeting Room

Item 4. Declaration of interests

The Chair noted that the Committee needs to be mindful to separate the ongoing court case of a specific licence from the broader WAP process.

Item 5. Nominated meeting evaluators

The meeting was quick catch up to discuss papers – no evaluation completed

Item 6. Correspondence

No correspondence

Item 7. Endorsement of Meeting #04 minutes

The Minutes from Meeting #04 were considered to be draft minutes to allow members to review out of session and will make comments which will be discussed at meeting #06, scheduled for 19 September 2022.

Item 8. Actions & business arising

Outstanding recommendations and actions from previous meetings		Status
A2.2	The department will provide members with links to several technical reports when they are published: 1) 2018 Western Davenport model report; 2) Independent model uncertainty analysis report; 3) Western Davenport water quality (salinity) report	Partially complete – the model uncertainty report has not yet been published as a summary is being prepared to release with the report.
A2.14	All members to consider opportunities for engagement with their sectors and contact the department to discuss.	Ongoing
R3.2	The Department considers producing a version of the WD water balance paper for the public record that clarifies terms, certainty in water balance volumes and differences in approaches between the current and future water allocation plans.	Agreed and to be undertaken in the context of Department process documentation, such as ESY guideline.
R3.4	Cultural values and significant sites should in some way be considered in the refined limits of acceptable change for the new Western Davenport plan.	CLC to provide suggested content for WAP documents as best practise

Outstanding actions from Meeting #04		Status
4.1	The Department to continue to work with CLC to set up appropriate mechanisms to improve Aboriginal involvement in water management such as via an Aboriginal Reference Group (which are being established in other plan areas in the NT), or other appropriate ways.	CLC has meeting scheduled for Tennant Creek 14 September with Department to discuss the new WAP
4.3	The Department to provide a limits of acceptable change paper summarising previous discussions and outlining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the level of protection offered to GDEs under the current Guideline proposed refinements The WAC also requested to understand the implications of retaining a stand-alone guideline vs including the limits of acceptable change into the WAP as recommended by the Department.	Paper provided for meeting #5
4.5	The Department to provide an objectives and outcomes paper summarising the development of objectives and associated outcomes.	Paper provided for meeting #5
4.6	The Department to advise when the Guideline on Establishing an ESY and the GDE monitoring guidelines are publicly available in the coming months. Optional action - ALEC/other members to propose guidance for the Committee to consider regarding minimising degradation to GDEs within the plan area from grazing etc (note this may be outside of the development of the WAP)	In draft
4.7	The Department to provide an ESY paper summarising the presentation on the ESY with maps that describe all scenarios, including the new scenarios discussed at the meeting (for the additional meeting in August).	Paper provided for meeting #5
4.8	Committee members to reconvene online in about a month to develop clear feedback on the recommended ESY.	Meeting #5 online 23 August

Business arising

No new business arising.

Item 9. Confirmation of agenda

The proposed agenda was confirmed.

Item 10. Overview: Northern Territory's Water Allocation Plan documents

- General support for the initiative
- Concern that this approach would mean that the implementation section would be rather open and lack accountability, however, this was potentially offset by making the various reports on implementation and monitoring more accessible and timely
- There will be a need to manage expectations and perhaps three reports over a 5 year period was feasible with an emphasis on reporting outcomes and responded to community concerns

Item 11. Objectives of the Western Davenport Water Allocation Plan

- Committee noted the use of the term key rather than important as it has a broader meaning which reflected primary, important and necessary measures.
- Recognised that some of the outcomes could be considered aspirational and would be difficult to measure and monitor.
- There were different views on the adoption of aspirational measures and strategies to achieve them- the discussion reinforced the need for regular reporting

- It was suggested that the preamble may need to reference the role of CLC and broader consultation mechanisms

Item 12. Limits of acceptable change

- It was recognised that the adoption of the 70% criteria was a major change
- Some of the GDE were in poor condition and it was considered that further degradation should be avoided
- It was suggested that the 30% loss was not acceptable
- Further discussion indicated that there was a lack of clarity about the science behind accepting a 30% reduction but it was acknowledged that there was considerable science from earlier work on vegetation clearance that 30% retention was a critical focal point (any less and there was a high risk of ecological collapse and hence anything above 30% was positive) and that 70% retention was a positive approach given the earlier recognition of the need for some development
- Again it was considered that the beneficiary of the water use should bear the costs of ensuring that the effect of any extraction on GDE was adequately monitored

Item 13. Estimated Sustainable Yield

- It was considered that figure 1 was confusing and it was suggested that a table be prepared to explain the ins and outs from each zone for example what is the relationship between recharge and evapotranspiration eg for central plains 96Gl recharge less 49.1 Gl evap plus 30Gl and 12 Gl input less 53.39 outflow would mean that there was only 35.5 Gl for allocation unless there was some mining of the storage unless evap is accounted separately in which case allocation would be 84.6 Gl
- The storage is based on a potential of 150m but in-practice (at the moment) extraction is limited to the top 80-90m
- The coincidence between a proposed ESY of 90Gl and total allocation of 90 Gl was identified as a possible issue of confidence in the Department's independence
- If we adopt the suggested 75% of recharge from WA then 63 Gl would be available in the central region
- The importance of the precautionary approach was reiterated with the suggestion that we should allocate small amounts and then monitor the effects and incrementally increase the allocation if appropriate
- It was recognised that from a GDE perspective it maybe 10-20-30 years before any impacts are recorded. These impacts were also confounded due to the episodic nature of the rain/inundation and vegetation response and how to account for future climate change.
- The balancing act between the Legislative mandate to allow development and manage environmental and cultural impacts was acknowledged
- On this basis the general view was that the ESY should be as conservative as possible
- It was pointed out that there needs to be high security for investment (especially irrigation infrastructure and operational costs) and any thought that allocations could be reduced in 20 or 30 years was not conducive to investment
- It is likely that the level of investment would be related to the perceived risk and amount of available water
- Suggest a lesser consumptive pool initially and review in 5 years based on real use and adopt an iterative approach of "suck it"- monitor it and review the allocation
- It was recognised that there was a legal approach to any reduction in allocations if that was required at some stage in the future and was outside of the scope of the WAP but did have a potential impact on the social capital of the Department
- How does the agency compile that data from the various sources and ensure the outcomes for the WAP were enforceable at the licence level- a procedural question to increase the level of confidence in the agency's ability to manage the resource

Item 14. WAP Development Scenarios

- The Department was congratulated on the effort undertaken to produce this material
- It was accepted that the interactive process was based on a generalised location for extraction and did not reflect actual draw down related to specific licences.
- Subsequent refinement of the models would be undertaken by proponents as they undertook required monitoring activities related to their licences.
- The intent of the outputs was to have a broad understanding of the impact of different development scenarios
- Concern was raised that the modelling was limited to 50 years while extraction would continue
- It was pointed out that the models were at a high level but did indicate that the cone of depression did not expand significantly in the outer years using the generalised location of extraction bores.
- Concern was raised about the potential draw down implications for GDEs and adjoining water users who would bear the costs of adjusting to the new hydrological regime

Item 15. Future Meetings

- The proposed date for the next meeting to discuss advice on the draft WAP was Monday 19 September (Steve would join by video).
- It was noted that the CLC facilitated meeting at Wycliffe Well would be on the 12 September and it was considered important for a WAP document (in some form) to be provided for discussion at the meeting. (Noting that the document would reflect the content of the draft WAP to be provided to the Committee)
- The feedback from the meeting could be provided to the subsequent WAC meeting proposed for the 19 September
- This would initiate real consultation with Aboriginal people as it potentially allowed for some of their comments to be reflected in the WAP
- It was noted that people attending the meeting would want to discuss the material with the broader community groups and this would take time. It was recognised that this further input would be appropriate as comment on the draft WAP when it was released

Items 16. Meeting Close

Meeting closed at 4.55pm