

Adelaide River water advisory committee: summary of meeting #7

Date: Tuesday 10th March 2026

Time: 10.00am – 3.40pm

Location: Tanami Room, Goyder Centre, Palmerston, and via MS teams

Attendance		
Name	Position and representation	
Darryl Day	Independent Chair	
Cherrian Luxton	Member, Community, Environment	attended online
Christine Jenner	Member, Aboriginal, Community, Environment	
David Ciaravolo	Member, Community, Tourism or Recreation	
David Gray	Member, Agriculture, Community	attended online
Peter Sheppert	Member, Agriculture, Tourism or Recreation	
Selena Perrett	Member, Aboriginal, Environment, Community, Tourism	
Tarizma Kenyon	Member, Aboriginal, Environment, Community, Tourism	
NTG Staff and Presenters		
Chris Parker	Engagement Officer (DLPE)	
Carly Hibble	Assistant Director Water Management (DLPE)	
Hannah Small	Committees Project Officer (DLPE)	
Jo Ellis	Director Water Management (DLPE)	10.00am-2.00pm
Nerida Beard	Executive Director, Water Resources (DLPE)	1.30pm-3.00pm
Simon Cruickshank	Director Water Projects (DLPE)	10.00am-1.00pm
Stephanie Hawkins	Director Community and Stakeholder Engagement (DLPE)	1.30pm-2.10pm
Trevor Durling	Principal Engineer, Darwin Region Water Supply Infrastructure Program, Power and Water Corporation (PWC)	2.00pm-3.30pm
Evan Tyrell	Senior Director Facilitated Projects and Infrastructure, Department of Logistics and Infrastructure (DLI)	2.00pm-3.00pm
Nicole Conroy	Chief Environmental Scientist (DLI)	2.00pm-3.00pm
Clare Dawson	Communications and Engagement Manager (DLI)	2.00pm-3.00pm
Apologies		
Name	Position and representation	
Phillip Goodman	Member, Aboriginal, Community	Apology

1. Meeting opening and attendance

1.1 Welcome, acknowledgement of country

Meeting commenced at 10.05am.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apology. The Chair thanked everyone for attending, despite the extreme weather and flooding events across the Territory at the time of the meeting.

The Chair Acknowledged Country and Traditional Custodians.

1.2 Formalities

The Chair confirmed the agenda.

The Committee nominated a member to complete the meeting evaluation.

The Committee confirmed there were no conflicts of interests or confidential matters to be declared.

The committee formally confirmed the previous meeting summary which has been loaded onto the website.

1.3 Introduction to the meeting format

Water Resources Division presented on the journey and reflections in developing the Adelaide River Water Allocation Plan to date.

The presentation reflected on the Adelaide River Water Allocation Plan as the NT's first surface water plan with specific rules for wet season take. A high volume of information exchange, team collaboration and iteration was undertaken on the water allocation plan through 2025 as the Division transitioned from a science focus to a planning focus. Planning will continue to be iterative and adaptive to the scientific studies in 2026, with 4 workstreams running consecutively. The Committee was invited to have their say on what they would like to see in 2026 to support the development and review of the plan.

A brief update on water monitoring results for the catchment this wet season was provided, noting that significant flow events were occurring at the time of the meeting.

Key Summary Points:

Chair acknowledged unique challenges presented by this plan given its surface water focus and strong links to major public water supply projects underway and planned.

The Committee discussed flow measurements taken by the Department this year in the Adelaide River catchment.

2. Matters for noting and discussion

2.1 Science to planning

The Department presented on how water science is integrated into water planning. The Department recapped the science work that has been completed in 2025, with 11 reports or bodies of work that are required to inform the three documents that will form the Adelaide River Water Allocation Plan (Water Plan, Background report and Implementation Actions). Pursuing the best relevant science available in these documents has been a long iterative process.

The Department is increasingly confident about the understanding of the catchment. The team is now working on understanding the tidal and other effects. Key findings over the previous years include that the floodplains primarily fill from rain rather than over-bank flows, and that the catchment is highly variable – including between wet and dry seasons, and between different years. The Department discussed studies that are still ongoing, including the ecohydrological *risk assessment* and the *Adelaide River Cultural Values Report*. The Department noted that ecological risk depends on alterations to the flow regime – not just volume – but the magnitude, timing, duration, frequency and rate of change. Understanding the full flow regime has remained a focus of the Department's science through 2025 and into 2026.

Key Summary Points:

The Committee discussed and requested information on the flora and fauna being assessed under these reports. The Committee requested advice on the species of interest the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) is considering as part of their eco-hydrological assessment.

The Committee collectively agreed that having the TAP report at least two weeks prior to the next Water Advisory Committee meeting was important to enable thoughtful consideration. The Committee agreed that a report that is around 75% completed would be acceptable, with changes identified during the report presentation. The Committee also advised their preference for the presenter to attend in person.

The Committee discussed and asked questions about the water take and use by the Humpty Doo Barramundi farm as a significant water user in the catchment. The Department committed to providing further information on water take which is publicly available through their water extraction and waste discharge licences.

Break 11.45am, Restarted 12.00pm

2.2 Engagement

The Division provided an update on the stakeholder engagement across the Adelaide River Catchment, and more broadly, and the key learnings from the engagements.

Engagement is being actioned by using direct engagement and targeted advertising as the engagement across the catchment is complex. Engagement fatigue and technical complexity have become dominant challenges. In 2026 the Division will aim for more coordination across government agencies, including with the Adelaide Off-stream Water Storage (AROWS) project proponents. Results from the 2025 media campaign were discussed, including that reaching the broader public requires more targeted messaging and concise messaging and that radio delivered the best value for money.

Key Summary Points:

An engagement matrix, showing the stakeholders that are being targeted for engagement on the Adelaide River Draft Water Allocation Plan was reviewed and discussed by the Committee. The Committee provided some recommendations of appropriate stakeholders to be included in the matrix. The Department committed to include the recommended stakeholders into the communications plan.

The Committee provided positive feedback on the Department's 3D Adelaide river catchment model as a communication tool, and the timely Cyclone Fina newsletter released in November 2025.

The Committee queried the status of groundwater bore drilling undertaken by Department of Logistics and Infrastructure in 2025, conversation was deferred until later in the day when DLI would be in attendance.

The committee raised that challenges for the Aboriginal Water Reserve will be broader than communication, and that there will be many obstacles for Aboriginal people getting to actual use of the reserves for economic benefits.

Break 12.45pm lunch, restarted 1.30pm

2.3 Cultural Values

The Office of Water Security (OWS) presented on the Cultural Values project key learnings and next steps for 2026.

OWS reiterated the objectives of the project to include Aboriginal cultural water values in water planning, management and decision making while protecting Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property. The

Adelaide River Cultural Values project identified a significant number of cultural assets and identified intangible values dependant on water in 2025 and three versions of the report were produced: one that can be made public, one that will be for NTG personnel to assist them with water planning and other relevant activities, and one that will be retained by the Northern Land Council (NLC). OWS acknowledged that gaps were identified in the reports in late 2025, and thanked members of the committee who assisted in bringing this issue to light. In 2026 OWS and the NLC will be working with families to include further stories from families not yet represented in the report. Building on the learnings from the Adelaide River Cultural Values report, the OWS is developing an internal Aboriginal Cultural Water Values Assessment Framework to assist with any future Cultural Water Values Assessments in water planning.

Key Summary Points:

The Committee noted the importance of ongoing recognition, improvement in understanding and monitoring of Cultural Values.

The Committee queried how they will be looped in on how Cultural Values will be integrated into the plan. The Department advised that the timing for looping the full Committee in is uncertain, but that it was progressing with the Committee's November 2025 recommendations to test options and seek feedback one on one or with specific family groups.

2.4 Darwin Region Water Supply Program Update

The Department of Logistics and Infrastructure (DLI) presented on the AROWS Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and the AROWS early concept design, followed by a presentation by Power and Water Corporation on the Manton Dam Return to service project.

DLI explained that the Environmental Impact Assessment will be submitted to two regulators. The NT Environment Protection Authority who regulate under the *Environment Protection Act 2019*. They regulate matters relating to land, sea, water, air and people. The Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water who under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* regulate the protection of threatened species.

DLI provided an outline of field work to support the EIA including: fauna assessments primarily via trail cameras, water bore drilling (17 drilled to date, with a further 12 proposed) and aeromagnetic surveys.

Power and Water advised that the Manton Dam Return to service project is on track to be completed mid 2026 and will increase the Darwin Water supply by 20% or 7300ML per year. Access to Manton Dam Recreation Reserve will remain almost the same as before; just some land near the pump station will be restricted access. Boat Ramp Access may be restricted occasionally (around 5% of days overall) toward the end of the dry season. Access restrictions will be announced and managed by the Parks and Wildlife Commission.

Key Summary Points:

The Committee discussed the survey works that have been occurring on Country, some Committee members have been participating in these surveys and other Committee members identified themselves as interested and willing to participate in further surveys.

The Committee discussed the species that are being assessed and raised concerns about only assessing threatened species. The Committee requested the presenters return at a later meeting to advise the committee on the values that have been assessed through the EIA, and that list of the species being assessed.

The Committee discussed the EIA Report, and how technical it might be, recommending that scientific studies be supported by context and communication tools to help the community interpret the outcomes. DLI advised that the Environmental Impact Statement report is required to be in to be plain English, however the technical reports will be attached as appendixes which will be in more technical or scientific language.

The Committee discussed the drilling sites and requested updates on the drilling and testing results noting that community members have raised concerns about the impact of potential seepage from the AROWS basin.

The Committee discussed the location of the pump station at Manton Dam, following the recent flooding incident at Darwin River Dam pump station which caused all pumps to be offline, and queried its resilience to similar flood events.

The Committee raised the presence of people fishing near Manton Dam and raised that people could be fishing in areas that are restricted.

2.5 Wrap Up

The Chair provided an overview of the discussions and presentations and reiterated the proposed schedule for the next meetings.

2.6 Meeting Evaluation

Meeting evaluation completed and all checklist items were satisfactory met. The Committee reiterated they would like papers at least two weeks prior to meetings to enable time to read and have time to formulate questions.

Overall, the Committee acknowledged growing confidence in understanding the catchment's behaviour, while recognising that there is much work ahead to develop the water plan.

Evaluation checklist			
Questions	Yes	No	N/A
Papers for the meeting were sent allowing enough time for members to read a familiarise themselves with agenda items prior to the meeting	✓		
Members arrived on time and stayed until the end of the meeting	✓		
Members were provided with the opportunity to speak	✓		
Members did not speak over others or dominate the discussion	✓		
Members felt able to ask questions without being discouraged for frowned upon	✓		
Committee issues are being dealt with at the meeting, not externally	✓		
Any potential conflicts of interest that were advised by members were dealt with appropriately	✓		

Closing comments

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution.

Meeting closed at 3:40pm

Actions register			
No.	Action	Action officer	Due date
1	Provide information on the Humpty Doo Barramundi Farm licence and water usage including: how much water they are using, what the licence volume is, how many times they take water during the dry season, how much water do they discharge, how often they discharge water, the quality of the water discharge.	DLPE	WAC 7
2	Provide information on the questions the TAP is considering and share the species that are being included in the eco-hydrological risk assessment.	DLPE	Ahead of WAC 7
3	Include the recommended stakeholders to the communications plan stakeholder matrix.	DLPE	Ahead of WAC 7
4	The Committee requested the presenters return at a later meeting to advise the Committee on the values that have been assessed. They also requested a list of the species that are being assessed as part of the EIA.	DLI	Ahead of WAC 7
5	Provide information about the location and data being produced from the bores the WRD drilled for AROWS basin geological drilling and findings from aquifer testing.	DLI	Ahead of WAC 7