

Water User Reference Group (WURG) Communiqué

Meeting 6 – Monday 20 July 2020

All members were in attendance, with apologies from:

- Darren Raeck, Local Government representative for the Northern NSW tributaries
- Greg Hill, Local Government representative for the Lower-Darling
- Malcolm Talbot, Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations representative
- Derek Hardman, Barkandji Native Title Corporation representative
- Uncle Badger Bates, Barkandji Native Title Corporation representative

David Kirby also attended as a proxy for Jeff Sowiak, the Local Government representative for the Barwon-Darling.

Purpose of meeting

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the Independent Panel's findings and recommendations from their recently released draft report and their proposed approach for the public webinar on Monday 27 July 2020.

Key items of discussion

The Panel provided the group with a re-cap of the draft report findings and recommendations and sought feedback from the group. Overall, the WURG were relatively comfortable with the draft findings and recommendations put forward by the Panel. Some suggestions for improvement to the report include:

- detail regarding how/when the recommendations could/should be addressed by the NSW Government e.g. inclusion of a timetable for implementation of the Panel's final recommendations;
- further detail around the need to consider a tributary's 'capacity to contribute' to downstream flow outcomes in the management of future first flush events;
- the need to broaden Indigenous engagement for further cultural input to the final report; and
- the importance of acknowledging the Panel's challenges in obtaining water balance information in relation to the event.

The Panel also sought the group's feedback on their proposed approach for the public webinar on Monday 27 July. The group identified the following as likely key areas of community interest for the public webinar:

- information and data that has not yet been made publicly available
- recommendations around the communication of future first flush events
- how connectivity and critical needs will be addressed, specifically for the Lower-Darling communities
- understanding tributary contributions to downstream flow outcomes
- the use of 'blanket' restriction rules for first flush events
- the lack of transparency around the end-of-valley targets used for 2020 first flush event
- data used for the 2020 first flush decision-making process
- how Native Title rights were considered in the management of the 2020 first flush event
- floodplain harvesting, specifically the volume of floodplain water harvested during the 2020 first flush event.

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Next meeting

The next meeting of the group will be held on 18 August 2020 and will discuss feedback received from public consultation of the draft report.