



Rural Water Council of WA (Inc)  
Meeting held by Video Conference  
Friday 3 July 2020 commencing 10:10 am

## Minutes

### 1 OPENING & WELCOME

The President, Mr L Short, welcomed delegates and representatives and declared the meeting open.

### 2 ATTENDANCE & APOLOGIES

#### 2.1 Attendance

Mr Lawrie Short	President
Cr Frank Johnson	Shire of Gingin
Mr Darren Simmons	Shire of Koorda
Cr Len Armstrong	Shire of Lake Grace
Cr Romeo Patroni	Shire of Merredin
Cr Julie Thomas	Shire of Moora
Cr Tony Sachse	Shire of Mount Marshall
Cr Tanya Gibson	Shire of Mount Marshall
Cr Peter Lines	Shire of Narembeen (from 10:20 am)
Cr Eileen O'Connell	Shire of Nungarin
Cr Rosemary Madacsi	Shire of Toodyay
Ms Suzie Hazlehurst	Shire of Toodyay
Mr Darren Wallace	Shire of York
Ms Patricia Pedelty	Senior Policy Advisor, Minister for Water
Mr Jason Moynihan	Department of Water & Environmental Regulation
Ms Tracy Calvert	Department of Water & Environmental Regulation
Mr Andrew Ducas	Water Corporation
Mr Bryn Jones	Water Corporation
Robert Dew	Executive Officer

#### 2.2 Apologies

Cr Lindsay Hagboom	Shire of Dowerin
Mr Peter Clarke	Shire of Goomalling
Cr Ross Chappell	Shire of Lake Grace
Cr Julie Flockart	Shire of Merredin
Cr Gary Coumbe	Shire of Nungarin
Cr Denis Warnick	Shire of York
Cr Stephen Muhleisen	Shire of York
Mr David Smith	
Mr Norm Smith	
Hon Martin Aldridge MLC	Member for Agricultural Region
Hon Laurie Graham MLC	Member for Agricultural Region

### 3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cr Eileen O'Connell and Cr Julie Thomas declared their interest in Water Corporation activities as their husbands are employees of the Water Corporation.

## 4 ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

## 5 MINUTES

### 5.1 Confirmation of Minutes

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held by teleconference on 20 March 2020 are submitted for confirmation. Copies of these Minutes have been circulated to all members and delegates.

#### RECOMMENDATION

That the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held 20 March 2020, as printed and circulated, be confirmed.

#### RESOLUTION

**Eileen O'Connell moved and Tony Sachse seconded –**

**That the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held 20 March 2020, as printed and circulated, be confirmed. CARRIED**

### 5.2 Business Arising from the Minutes

(a) Participation by Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (Item 5.2(a))

Last meeting noted that at the 18 October 2019 meeting Hon Darren West MLC had offered to follow up attendance by representatives from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. The meeting resolved that this matter be followed up. Enquiry has been made to Mr West asking if he has been able to follow this matter up and an invitation has again been sent to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

#### RECOMMENDATION

For noting

**NOTED**

(b) Drought Communities Program Extension (Item 5.2(b))

The meeting noted that formal responses to requests to the Federal Minister for Regional Development Hon Michael McCormack, the Federal Shadow Minister for Regional Development Hon Catherine King, the Member for Durack Hon Melissa Price MP and the Member for O'Connor Hon Rick Wilson MP regarding the criteria for selection of communities to receive funding under the Drought Communities Program Extension had, at that time, not been received. In addition, letters were also written to the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management, Hon David Littleproud, and the Federal Shadow Minister for the Environment and Water, Hon Terri Butler.

The following responses have been received –

Hon Catherine King, Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development

*I agree, the lack of transparency around the criteria used in the selection of Western Australian communities to receive assistance is deeply troubling.*

*Labor has held concerns regarding the operation of the Drought Communities Program for some time. I have written to the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) on several occasions, most recently on 3 March 2020, to raise my concerns about grant assessment processes and ministerial decision making on grant applications run through the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications. This included the Drought Communities Program. You can access this correspondence here: <https://www.anao.gov.au/work/request/programs-supporting-regional-development-and-jobs-growth>*

*I would encourage the Rural Water Council of WA Inc., to consider raising your concerns about the Drought Communities Program directly with the ANAO. The ANAO treats all correspondence from members of the public in complete confidence and any potential correspondence from the Rural Water Council on WA Inc., to the ANAO in regard to the Drought Communities Program will lend weight to the Program being added to the ANAO's audit list.*

*In the meantime, be assured my colleagues and I will use the Senate Estimate process raise the questions you have posed about the Drought Communities Program extension through the parliament.*

Hon Terri Butler, Shadow Minister for the Environment and Water

*Thanks very much for your letter and informing us of your views about the lack of transparency around these funding arrangements. We attempted to get to the bottom of it during estimates too.*

Hon Rick Wilson, Member for O'Connor

*The drought communities program is based on a formula developed by consultancy firm EY at the request of Minister Littleproud after his visit to Kalgoorlie in late November.*

*The formula requires that a LGA has 24 months of rainfall at below 50% of long term mean rainfall and 7% of the workforce employed in agriculture or related service industries (machinery dealers, food processors, abattoirs, contractors etc.)*

*There was no application process and the formula was applied to all LGA's using BOM and Bureau of Statistics data. It has been reported that the former Agricultural Minister Bridgette McKenzie did make some additions to the program in round one but I am not aware of any interventions in round two.*

*The formula will be reviewed every month on a rolling basis (for example if a shire had a huge rainfall event in January 2018 which pushed the average up substantially, when the formula is reapplied in February that month will drop out of the rolling average).*

Acknowledgements of receipt of our letter has been received from Hon Michael McCormack, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development, and Hon Melissa Price, Member for Durack.

Hon Mia Davies has provided a copy of the response from Hon David Littleproud, Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Services, to her concerns regarding eligibility for the Drought Communities Program extension for local governments within her electorate. The Minister advised Ms Davies that an independent review of the methodology, delivery and objectives of the program had recently been completed and an interim methodology to inform the allocation of funding developed. A copy of the Minister's response is attached to the Agenda.

**RECOMMENDATION**

For consideration

**NOTED**

(c) Other

No other matters were brought forward.

Cr Peter Lines entered the meeting at 10:20 am.

## 6 REPORTS

### 6.1 Water Corporation Report

Presentation of the Water Corporation's report. The Water Corporation has been asked to provide an update on the Muresk desalination trial.

#### RECOMMENDATION

That the Water Corporation's report be received.

Mr Andrew Ducas presented the Water Corporation's report (attached).

Cr P Lines asked what happens to the saline water discharged by the desalination unit. Mr Ducas replied that a deep reinjection bore was used for the disposal of the brine.

Ms T Calvert gave an overview of the requirements to discharge saline water into the environment –

- Notice of intention to pump or drain water must be given
- Options for discharge must be shown
- Must be no degradation to the environment or the downstream neighbours
- The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development will inspect the site and the discharge options
- The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation will review.

In response to a question Ms Calvert replied that the requirements were under the *Soil and Land Conservation Act 1945*.

Cr T Sachse expressed disappointment that the National On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme had closed and enquired if the State Minister for Water had given any indication if the State's Farm Water Rebate Scheme was to be reinstated. Ms P Pedelty advised that the Minister for Water had requested an additional \$1.9 m funding from the Commonwealth to cover expected applications under the National scheme. Mr J Moynihan advised that the Department was accepting new applications for the National scheme until definite advice is received that the National scheme will be closed. He commented that information to date was that the additional funding request was not likely to be approved.

Cr T Sachse commented that the State Farm Water Rebate Scheme had been a very good scheme and, in his view, had been successful. He enquired if there was any appetite for the scheme to be reinstated. Ms P Pedelty advised that she would pass on the comments to the Minister. She commented that there were no plans for the scheme to be reinstated and that the scheme had ran for 20 years.

Cr P Lines referred to the Wadderin Dam, the slow movement in handing over to the Shire and asbestos at the dam. He commented that the water level in the dam was going down and that it was likely that further asbestos will be exposed and will need to be cleaned up. He also enquired if scheme water could be used to top up the dam. Mr A Ducas replied that the Water Corporation would welcome discussions on the arrangements for the dam and that he didn't believe the Corporation would agree to use scheme water to top up the dam.

Cr R Madacsi commented on the ongoing issues with the standpipe in Toodyay, that an additional standpipe for domestic use is to be installed in the town, that two-thirds of the Shire has no scheme water, and that farmland standpipes are not available for stock water.

#### RESOLUTION

**Frank Johnson moved and Peter Lines seconded –  
That the Water Corporation's report, as attached, be received.**

**CARRIED**

### 6.2 Department of Water and Environmental Regulation Report

Presentation of the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation's report.

#### RECOMMENDATION

That the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation's report be received.

Ms T Calvert presented the Department of Water and Environment Regulation's report (attached).

Ms Patricia Pedelty left the meeting at 10:54 am.

Mr J Moynihan commented that the Minister for Water's Office is provided regular updates on the water deficiency declarations. There is a big area on the South Coast which has been impacted by the dry season and over \$3 million has been spent to date in carting water.

#### **RESOLUTION**

**Peter Lines moved and Tony Sachse seconded –**

**That the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation's report (as attached) be received.**  
**CARRIED**

### **6.3 Region Reports**

Presentation by delegates of region reports.

#### Dandaragan (Lawrie Short)

- Lower rainfall being experienced (182 mm to end of June).
- Spring sourced permanent creeks are flowing better than normal, with some erosion along banks.
- Four fully operating open cut sand mines are continuing to recharge coastal plains aquifers with either dredging or dewatering.
- High winds have not held up the construction of the \$1B Yandin Windfarm (51 towers - 80 m high with 75 m blades).
- Horticulture areas are being encouraged to avoid permanent creeks by putting in bore/centre pivot irrigation at \$1 million each.
- Some destocking being undertaken due to pastures not coming away.
- Shire is sharing water (non potable) from the Golf Club bore to water ovals in Jurien Bay.

#### Mount Marshall (Tony Sachse)

The Shire of Mount Marshall has resolved to enter into a license for the Shire to occupy the relevant land around Waddouring Dam – Reserve 28120 and has written to the Water Corporation confirming this. It seems that the Water Corporation, within a license, will consider use of the reserve for the following:

- As a potential (non potable) water source – perhaps by way of a standpipe or other such access.
- As a leisure facility (such as nature walks, picnics etc).
- As a camping opportunity in the future (such as the Shire already provides at some of the local "rocks").
- If suitable and affordable, for use of water sports (e.g. kayaking).

Some areas in the North of the Shire where high rainfall events in February 2020 did not occur, and with below average rainfall over recent months, see dams (for stock water and domestic use) at very low levels. This contrasts markedly with some Southern properties in the Shire who have received very high rainfall of up to 260 mm year to date recordings.

The Shire of Mount Marshall will need to consider the costs associated with the supply of community water given that the new standpipe arrangements have now been in place for twelve months. Quantifying these supply costs, and the mechanism's associated with any cost recovery on this community water, will all need to be considered.

Ms T Calvert advised that she would meet with Cr Sachse regarding the transfer of Waddouring Dam to the Shire.

#### Toodyay (Rosemary Madacsi)

Toodyay has a single LGA 50 mm standpipe on the Northam-Toodyay Rd near the Toodyay Road intersection with a 500-600 kL/min flow rate. Water is sourced through the Integrated Water Supply Scheme, a combined source of desalinated, surface and artesian water via the Mundaring treatment plant and Goldfields pipeline at a concessional LGA rate of \$2.60 kL.

Within the community there was a lack of understanding the standpipe was for local government use and the proliferation of residential subdivisions within the Shire led to reliance on the standpipe. Water had been a contentious issue within the community for a very long time with small landowners that lacked sufficient potable storage supply.

Around six years ago, Toodyay installed a card system to the standpipe and water use dramatically increased. It was apparent, use of the subsidised water was by more than the local government. Water Corporation responded and imposed a commercial rate as more acceptable to capture all users.

Today, a full load (approximately 15,000 kL) costs approximately \$200-\$250 depending on distance from the standpipe. Cartage is the cause of cost pressure as, at a commercial rate of \$5.136 (\$92) plus a Shire charge of a \$1/kL (\$15) water for a 15,000 kL load was not expensive. The community responded by carting their own causing long queues at the standpipe which impeded commercial and agricultural operations.

The Shire lobbied for a solution to reduce wait times on the existing standpipe.

In 2019 Water Corporation addressed the issue of community use of LGA owned standpipes by charging commercial rates and subsidised Shire accounts, then offered a subsidised community standpipe scheme (due to close on the 30 June 2020). Water Corporation provided free installation and administration fees if the local government incurred the infrastructure contribution fee (\$2,200-\$6,633) and the standpipe/controller (\$12,000 to \$15,000).

Council accepted the offer, identified a site in Stirling Terrace adjacent to the Information Bay near the Hamersley Street intersection. A budget allocation of \$15,000 was made and most of the standpipe infrastructure, including a backflow prevention device and power was installed but a desired higher spec standpipe controller to complete the installation, exceeded the budget.

A further \$29,000 has been committed in the 2020/21 budget, adopted 23 June 2020, as the controller had the benefit of several payment options, including coin and credit card facilities. The choice based on access being easily accessible for both the community and tourists and would lead to a reduction in administrative costs (i.e. issuing/monitoring electronic tags, invoicing).

Since, there has been a recent push by some with commercial interests to install a water tank by the residential standpipe. The cost incurred would be considerable and would defeat the intended purpose to reduce wait times, as the low flow rate is unable to refill a tank efficiently as for example, a 100,000 litre tank would require almost 28 hours to refill based on a 60 litre/min flow rate).

The conclusion is residential supply needs to be addressed by water management education and an increase in storage capacity. Agricultural demand requires further investigation.

There is recourse through Water Corporation to be reimbursed for water extracted by property owners for fire control. Evidence needs to be provided of the amount extracted and verification of the fire by the fire brigade, or through the Shire if the LGA standpipe was used.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Region Reports be received.

#### **Resolution**

**Rosemary Madacsi moved and Frank Johnson seconded –  
That Region Reports be received.**

**CARRIED**

## 7 FINANCE

### 7.1 Financial Reports

Statement of Receipts and Payments for the period 1 January 2020 to 31 May 2020 (attached). The Group's current cash balance is \$497.64.

Invoices for 2020 membership fees (totalling \$5,850) have been prepared and will be sent out in the next few days together with a covering letter setting out the reasons for the membership fee increase.

#### RECOMMENDATION

That the financial report for the period 1 January 2020 to 31 May 2020 be received.

#### RESOLUTION

**Frank Johnson moved and Peter Lines seconded –**

**That the financial report for the period 1 January 2020 to 31 May 2020, as attached, be received.**  
**CARRIED**

### 7.2 Accounts for Payment

The following accounts are presented for payment –

<u>Payee</u>	<u>For</u>	<u>Amount</u>
<u>Accounts to be Paid</u>		
R W & S Dew	Secretarial Service January 2020 to March 2020	1,017.28
R W & S Dew	Secretarial Service March 2020 to June 2020	962.50
	TOTAL (no GST)	<u>\$1,979.78</u>

#### RECOMMENDATION

That the accounts as listed above, totalling \$1,979.78 be passed for payment, subject to payment not being made until sufficient funds are available.

#### RESOLUTION

**Eileen O'Connell moved and Frank Johnson seconded –**

**That the accounts as listed above, totalling \$1,979.78 be passed for payment, subject to payment not being made until sufficient funds are available.**  
**CARRIED**

## 8 BUSINESS

### 8.1 Access to Surface Water

The Shire of Gingin has submitted the following for discussion to raise awareness and consultation regarding the ongoing issue with actions of community members accessing surface water and the lack of action from the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation.

#### BACKGROUND

##### Issue 1

The Gingin Brook (the Brook) has been a contentious issue for generations through residents and landowners that reside on the Brook accessing the surface water for their own purposes, damming the Brook or even diverting the Brook to be able to access.

These actions have created large community rifts and anger and further ongoing negative action that has resulted in significant damage to the Brook and more landowners not accessing water and affecting the waterway further down the Brook.

The Brook is not the only waterway affected like this in the Shire, however, this is being used as an example to raise awareness of the issue and the lack of willingness by the Department to take responsibility over the issue and protect this precious resource and the negativity that the resultant lack of action has created within the community.

The Shire of Gingin has, over many years, become frustrated with the lack of commitment and action from the Department and suggests that a meeting with the Minister for Water be called to discuss this important issue and others from the Water Group to seek action and response to settle these issues.

Provided for reference is the recent letter sent by the Shire to the Department and the response received. The response is disappointing and in essence, reading between the lines, is that this matter is difficult to deal with and the Department is not resourced to undertake the required inspections and actions. As such, the Shire of Gingin and many other local governments will continue to have issues relating to surface water use affecting the environment for generations to come.

#### Issue 2

Naming and responsibility of waterways has created issues within the Shire of Gingin in that due to the lack of naming/registration/delineation of waterways results in the issue of the lack of monitoring and enforcement in how these are managed.

This has resulted in some of the problems listed in Issue 1 above but mostly creates the ongoing issue of unclear responsibility lines from the State Government to Local Government. With the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation being the governing body for waterways, it is deemed an important enough issue for this matter to be resolved for the long term and to ensure that environmental impacts are reduced in an environment where water is becoming a scarcer resource.

#### Appendices (attached to Agenda)

Correspondence from the Shire of Gingin to the Department concerning the Gingin Brook and the response received.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Rural Water Council:

- (1) Request the Minister for Water to attend a meeting in the near future and respond to these matters and others that the Rural Water Council have; or
- (2) Write to the Minister for Water to respond to these matters and others that the Rural Water Council have.

Mr J Moynihan commented –

- There may be little control available in unproclaimed areas.
- The Shire of Gingin has both proclaimed and unproclaimed areas.
- Happy to meet with the Shire of Gingin. Will arrange for the Regional Manager and representatives from the Licensing Section to attend.

#### **RESOLUTION**

**Tony Sachse moved and Frank Johnson seconded –**

**That the offer by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation to meet with the Shire of Gingin to discuss the Shire's concerns with access to surface water be noted and that Cr Johnson be requested to provide a report to the next meeting. **CARRIED****

#### **8.2 National On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme**

The National On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme is available to eligible commercial livestock and horticulture farmers and pastoralists in rural WA. The rebate is for 25% up to a maximum of \$25 000 for the purchase, delivery and installation of new water infrastructure to address animal welfare and permanent planting water needs and improve resilience to drought.

Eligible items for livestock farmers include water storage devices such as tanks and troughs, pipes, fittings and pumps associated with water distribution systems, new bores and the desilting of dams by a contractor, and applications for rebate may be applied to costs incurred after 30 June 2018.



Eligible items for horticulture (permanent plantings) farmers include drilling of new horticulture groundwater bores and the desilting of dams by a contractor, and applications for rebate may be applied to costs incurred after 30 June 2019.

While the Scheme is administered by the State Government, it is a Commonwealth Government initiative that was established with a condition that the Scheme will close on 30 April 2021, or when the funding allocation is exhausted, whichever occurs first.

Due to the high volume of applications received for the National On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme, it is now over-subscribed, and the current funding allocated to Western Australia by the Commonwealth Government in both 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 has been fully allocated.

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation website notes that –

- the State Government remains committed to administering the Scheme in Western Australia and has requested additional funding from the Commonwealth Government; and
- the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation will continue to accept new applications for the Scheme in Western Australia and the applications will be progressed in the order received if additional funding is made available by the Commonwealth.

At its meeting on 22 June 2020 the Executive Committee noted the oversubscription of the Scheme and requested that the matter be brought forward for discussion at this meeting.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

- (1) That the Commonwealth Government be urged to provide additional funding to Western Australia for the National On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme; and
- (2) That the State Government be urged to reinstate the Farm Water Rebate Scheme.

#### **RESOLUTION**

**Tony Sachse moved and Rosemary Madacsi seconded –**

- (1) That the Commonwealth Government be urged to provide additional funding to Western Australia for the National On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme; and**
- (2) That the State Government be urged to reinstate the Farm Water Rebate Scheme.**

**CARRIED**

### **8.3 Standpipe Swipe Card Systems**

At its meeting on 22 June 2020 the Executive Committee discussed the use of swipe cards on local government standpipes and their effect on community water costs. To better understand the use of swipe cards and to assist those local governments considering their installation the Executive Committee requested local government members who have installed swipe cards on their standpipes to provide a report to this meeting on the costs of installing the equipment, operating costs, any savings in water costs and any benefits or disadvantages in the operation of the swipe card system.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

For discussion

#### **RESOLUTION**

**Rosemary Madacsi moved and Julie Thomas seconded –**

**That local government members who have installed swipe cards on their standpipes be requested to provide information on the costs of installing the equipment, operating costs, any savings in water costs and any benefits or disadvantages in the operation of the swipe card system for consideration at the next meeting.**

**CARRIED**

#### **8.4 Concession for Agricultural Stock Water Use**

Cr R Madacsi has submitted that following item for consideration.

Toodyay's access to the Integrated Water Supply Scheme is very limited, with two thirds of Toodyay's population not serviced by a reticulated water supply including most farming enterprises.

The Fixed Standpipe pricing at a commercial rate for local government standpipes does not provide relief for agricultural stock water demands during dry years, in those Shires with no other water sources than the local government standpipe/s.

The farmland standpipes in the Toodyay Shire have long since been decommissioned.

Although domestic standpipes are being installed in participating towns, including Toodyay, the 25 mm, 60 litre/min flow rate is too slow to fill farming water cartage tanks quickly and defeats the purpose of a reduction in waiting times for users.

The farmlands project is now in its fourth stage and Toodyay is seeking inclusion for farmlands refurbishment investments for three standpipes on the existing pipeline or through a swipe card system at the local government standpipe and Shire billing system. The priority being the lack of a mechanism to deliver subsidised stock water in the Shire and the high cost of commercially acquired supplies.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Rural Water Council requests the Water Corporation to include the Shire of Toodyay for refurbishment investments with the installation of three farmland standpipes or a subsidised stock water rate via a swipe card at the local government standpipe and Shire billing system.

#### **MOTION**

Rosemary Madacsi moved and Julie Thomas seconded –

That the Rural Water Council requests (a) the Water Corporation to include the Shire of Toodyay for refurbishment investments with the installation of three farmland standpipes; or (b) a subsidised stock water rate via a swipe card at the local government standpipe and Shire billing system.

With leave of the meeting the motion was **WITHDRAWN**

Cr Peter Lines left the meeting at 11:30 am.

#### **Resolution**

**Tony Sachse moved and Julie Thomas seconded –**

**That the Water Corporation be requested to consider the use of swipe card access for high volume standpipes which are used for community, commercial and stock water and are not connected to scheme water.** **CARRIED**

Cr T Sachse indicated that he would be happy to talk with the Shires of Toodyay and Mount Marshall regarding the potential for non-potable water options.

Mr Jason Moynihan left the meeting at 11:44 am.

#### **8.5 Format of Meetings**

The 20 March 2020 meeting resolved that future meetings of the Group be held by Zoom video conference with a request that the security and confidentiality of Zoom video conferencing be checked.

Since March, Zoom has commenced an on-going series of changes and updates to improve its security and privacy. These include upgraded end-to-end encryption; ability for a host to lock meetings, remove participants and restrict screen sharing and chatting in meetings; enabling by default meeting passwords and waiting rooms (which allows a host to select who can enter a meeting); introducing more complex passwords and meeting IDs; automatic upgrade of old versions of the app to version 5; advice to users on how to stay safe when using Zoom and changes to its privacy policy.

In discussions with the Water Corporation they have indicated that their function room is still available for in-person meetings, subject to numbers being restricted by any COVID-19 safety requirements (currently the 2 square metre rule).

The Executive Committee has requested that the format of Rural Water Council meetings be put forward for discussion. While making no formal recommendation the Executive Committee indicated a preference that, where possible, meetings should include both in-person meetings and meetings by video conference.

**RECOMMENDATION**

For discussion

**Resolution**

**Tony Sachse moved and Eileen O'Connell seconded –**

- (a) That the October meeting of the Rural Water Council be an in-person meeting subject to COVID-19 safe arrangements being able to be met; and**  
**(b) That consideration be the meeting being hosted by the Shire of Merredin.**

**CARRIED**

Tracy Calvert left the meeting at 11:52 am.

**9 URGENT BUSINESS (as permitted by the Presiding Member)**

**9.1 National Drought and North Queensland Flood Recovery and Response Agency**

Cr T Sachse drew attention to the establishment of the National Drought and North Queensland Flood Recovery and Response Agency in December 2019 and to approach by the Regional Recovery Officer - North WA seeking to provide information and support to communities.

The purpose of the Agency is to provide leadership and coordination of the Commonwealth's response and recovery assistance to communities affected by drought. Additionally, it will provide information relating to the response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The Agency will work with communities, all levels of government, charities and agricultural organisations to support farmers and other rural and regional Australians living through the immediate and longer-term effects of drought and flood. The Agency's Regional Recovery Officers will provide information to stakeholders and communities on the Australian Government's Drought Response and provide communities with a direct link back to Government. They will work with service delivery agencies linking services, providing updated information and support material to share with the local community

The Regional Recovery Officer – North WA is based in Geraldton and covers an area north of Perth, out to Southern Cross, the Shire of Wiluna and north into the Kimberley.

Cr Sachse recommended that the Regional Recovery Officer – North WA, Candy Hudson, be invited to the next meeting of the Rural Water Council.

Due to technical difficulties, Mr Lawrie Short left the meeting at 11:56 am. The Deputy President, Cr Tony Sachse, assumed the Chair.

**Resolution**

**Eileen O'Connell moved and Frank Johnson Thomas seconded –**

**That the Regional Recovery Officer – North WA, Ms Candy Hudson, be invited to the next meeting of the Rural Water Council to provide an update on the work of the National Drought and North Queensland Flood Recovery and Response Agency and her role in providing information and support to local communities.**

**CARRIED**

**9.2 Future Drought Fund**

The meeting requested that information on the Future Drought Fund be provided for consideration at the next meeting. Local governments to be encouraged to provide a report for consideration.

**9.3 Farmland Project**

The meeting requested an update on the Farmlands project

**10 DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING**

Future meetings are scheduled for –

- Friday 16 October 2020
- Friday 19 March 2021
- Friday 2 July 2021.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the next ordinary meeting of the Rural Water Council be held Friday 16 October 2020 by video conference.

**CONSENSUS RESOLUTION**

**That the next ordinary meeting of the Rural Water Council be held Friday 16 October 2020 and that, subject to COVID-19 safe requirements, the meeting be held in-person at a venue to be determined, venue to have access to telephone and video facilities. CARRIED**

**11 CLOSURE**

There being no further business the Deputy President thanked delegates and observers for their attendance and declared the meeting closed at 12:00 noon.

**CERTIFICATION**

These Minutes were confirmed by the meeting held on .....

Signed: .....  
(Chairman of meeting at which the Minutes were confirmed)

## REPORTS

### WATER CORPORATION

#### Muresk Reverse Osmosis Farm Water Supply Micro-Trial Project

A collaboration between Wheatbelt Development Commission (Elise Woods), Water Corporation (Anthony Bodycoat) and Murdoch University. The trial has been operational for 6 months and is due to be completed soon. It is part of the larger project presented to the RWC in October, by Anthony Bodycoat. The trial will provide initial information to inform and focus future efforts on issues and opportunities to potentially reduce operating costs.

Fairly standard unit purchase with solar was ~ \$70 K including solar and tanks. The main difference to other units is the inclusion of a small battery to enable safe shutdown. A larger unit was needed to produce the same volume of water since it only operates during daytime hours. If run from mains power can operate up to 24/7 and produce significantly more water.

Although it has suitable water, Muresk Institute Farm was chosen as an ideal trial-site. We will be seeking higher TDS water to test the unit in future trials. TDS on feed water at farm is only 1,500 mg/l; permeate or treated water is less than 50 mg/L TDS. A deep reinjection bore is used for the brine disposal.

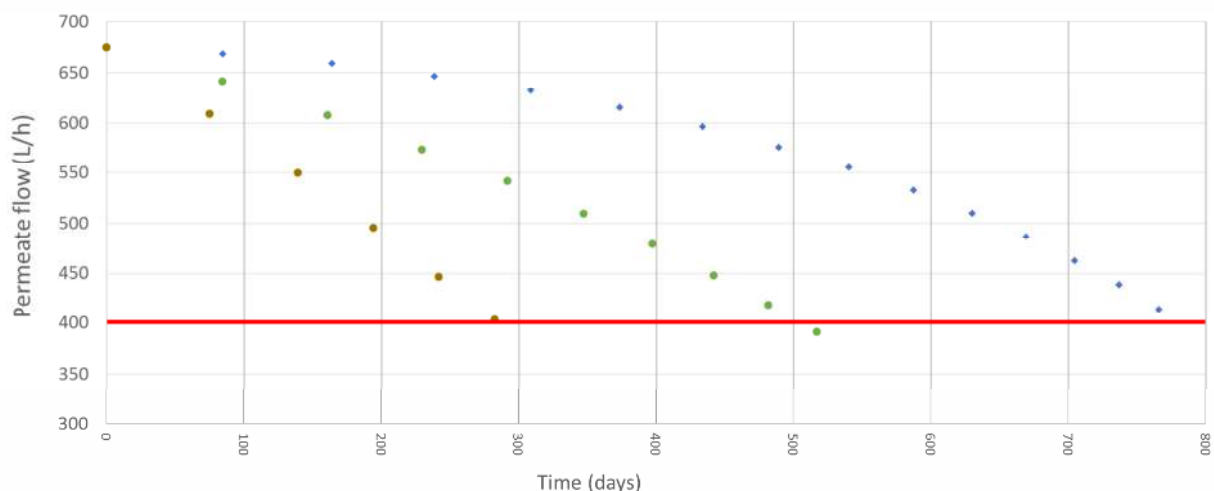
*Initial Results:* The unit performed well on solar with the automatic shutdown when sunlight is reduced. Cleaning must be performed sooner rather than later to avoid irreversible fouling and reduction of membrane life. The membrane performance considerably diminishes following a period with operating issues and inactivity (which occurred during COVID 19 travel restrictions).

#### *Observations and Conclusions to date:*

The importance of establishing a good maintenance schedule, without which the membrane performance degrades and operable life is reduced. With optimal cleaning, the membranes are likely to last for 2 years. Membrane replacement is the most significant item in operating costs (40-50%). Water quality has a big impact on membrane performance and operating life.

After the micro-trial, the unit will be used in a location with different water quality challenges as part of the 4 year study. The long-term project is looking to discuss with farmers through the next phase, with the next stage seeking to optimise plant operations, to improve recovery rates and lower operating costs. The effect of intermittent functioning (solar power) on membrane performance will be an area of further study to determine impact and potential management. Please contact Anthony if you would like to know more about the project. Anthony.Bodycoat@watercorporation.com.au (Phone: 6330 6438)

#### Membrane life span simulation



Assume 400L/hr minimum acceptable hourly production.

### Farmlands Projects

Last financial year project delivery was \$4.3 million, and Stage 3 is now complete. Stages 4 and 5 are progressing well:

4. Two sites added, 3 sites in construction, 1 delay across Avon river due to weather.
5. Three sites remaining (2 soon to commence construction, 1 under tendering)

We have a good selection of local and aboriginal contractors with whom the works are being tendered. Stage 6 is being activated with a budget of \$3.5 million to provide further work over the next few years, including: four sites across the Morawa area.

### Major Projects across the Rural Water Council Area

*Lake Grace pipeline replacement:* 2.1 kilometres from Commonwealth Rd in Jilakin, to Kulin-Lake Grace Road in Kuender. Work began in May and is expected to finish in November 2020. The original pipeline was installed in 1965 and services the Great Southern Towns Water Supply Scheme. Work is within the Shire of Kulin (1.3 km) and Shire of Lake Grace (~750 metres) across 28 work sites. The pipeline is below ground and will be replaced within road reserves and adjacent properties.

*Beverley Water Supply:* A 4,000 kL storage tank, associated water main (complete) and construction of a new pumping station (underway) is due for completion by end 2020. This work will improve water pressure for customers in Beverley and provide a greater volume of reserve water storage.

*Northam Tank Roof Replacement:* We are currently working to replace the roof on one of Northam's water tanks. Completion is expected by the end of September.

### Small Dams Project

Water Corporation owns or manages a number of land parcels throughout agricultural areas that contain small dams, no longer required for drinking water supply purposes.

These dams have effectively become community water sources primarily utilised for fire-fighting, road building, agricultural and / or drought relief purposes.

Water Corporation is interested to speak with Local Government across the Wheatbelt, to discuss interest in accepting the transfer of any surplus small dams in their district.

If Shires are interested in taking over dams in their district, Water Corporation will perform the necessary paperwork and liaise with DPLH to effect transfer of the land and assets.

Please contact Water Corporation's Property Portfolio Team for further details, via: David Morgan – David.Morgan@watercorporation.com.au – (Phone 9420 2640)

## **DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION**

### **Rural Water Program Update**

The Rural Water Planning program targets the State's dryland agricultural regions which receive less than 600 millimetres of annual rainfall. Those without access to a reticulated water service are given priority as these areas are the most vulnerable to serious water deficiencies.

### **Water Deficiency Declarations**

Under the Government policy relating to the provision of emergency farmland water in dryland agricultural districts, there is provision for you to approve a water deficiency declaration in the event that a localised group of farmers have to travel more than 40 km from the farm gate to cart water for livestock purposes. Under such an arrangement, the Department of Water and Environmental Regulations takes responsibility for ensuring that livestock water is provided at a more central point to reduce the distances travelled by farmers and the associated transportation cost. A declaration is a last resort option after all available community water supplies have been exhausted. Water deficiency arrangements are managed by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulations through the Rural Water Planning Program.

Low winter rainfall during 2018, through the 2019 growing season and into 2020 has resulted in minimal runoff into farm dams in Shires in the southern and south eastern wheatbelt area which has created an increasing need to cart water for livestock.

With continued hot and dry conditions and unsustainable local supplies and long haulage, 12 Water Deficiency Declarations have been announced:

- Mount Short area of the Shire of Ravensthorpe on 8 May 2019;
- Mallee Hill area of the Shire of Lake Grace on 15 May 2019;
- Hollands Rock area of the Shire of Kent on 5 June 2019;
- Ardler Road area of the Shire of Lake Grace on 5 December 2019;
- the northern area of the Shire of Jerramungup on 18 December 2019;
- the Grass Patch area of the Shire of Esperance on 18 December 2019;
- Jerramungup (east) and Ravensthorpe (west) on 13 February 2020;
- the Kukerin area of Dumbleyung Shire on the 21 February 2020;
- the Hamilton's dam area of Kent Shire on the 21 February 2020;
- the Salmon Gums area of the Shire of Esperance declared 6 March 2020;
- the Gairdner area of the Shire of Jerramungup declared 11 June 2020 and
- the Cascade area of the Esperance Shire on 16 June 2020.

The Water Corporation continues to support the declarations by arranging the supply of water to central locations (storage tanks) for all declarations.

Department of Water and Environmental Regulations and Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development closely monitor the rainfall across the broader agricultural region, along with the status of strategic community supplies and livestock water carting needs of farmers across the Great Southern Shires and in high risk areas.

While there has not been enough water to revoke/cancel any of the WDDs we have been able to wind back on water carting volumes and at some sites suspend water carting as on-farm and strategic supplies are currently meeting livestock water needs.

Water carting is currently not required at Mallee Hill and Ardler Road in Lake Grace, and Hamilton's Dam and Holland Rock in Kent due to reasonable rainfall in recent weeks.

### **National On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme –**

Due to the high volume of applications received for the National On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme, it is now over-subscribed, and the current funding allocated to Western Australia by the Commonwealth Government in both 2019-20 and 2020-21 has been fully allocated.

While the Scheme is administered by the State Government, it is a Commonwealth Government initiative that was established with a condition that the Scheme will close on 30 April 2021, or when the funding allocation is exhausted, whichever occurs first.

The State Government remains committed to administering the Scheme in Western Australia and has requested additional funding from the Commonwealth Government.

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation will continue to accept new applications for the Scheme in Western Australia and the applications will be progressed in the order received if additional funding is made available by the Commonwealth.

**Status (as of 15/06/2020):**

- Total number of applications received since scheme opened 1257
- 941 approved rebates.

**Strategic Community Water Supplies** throughout the dryland agricultural region are available for emergency livestock water requirements. They are substantial and valuable water supplies that have been established primarily to protect from major livestock welfare incidents caused by low winter rainfall. The Department is working through a program to upgrade priority sources vested with the Department. Table 1 outlines the works undertaken in 2018/2019.

**Community Water Supply program (2019/2020 round)**

Round 1 and 2 - now complete.

Broomehill-Tambellup	\$68,421	Upgrading and installing additional pipelines between dams will maximise the efficient transfer and use of harvested water within the town site and effectively drought proof the town. In particular, the newly sealed 3.57 ha of CBH catchment for the "CBH" and "Bignell" dams which will generate an additional 13.96 megalitres per year of water for town irrigation and emergency firefighting and livestock water.
Geraldton	\$100,000	Project will improve infrastructure at three strategic non-potable bores located in the Mullewa region. These will be used to provide fit for purpose water for firefighting and rural unsealed roadworks maintenance. At each bore site a 173 kilolitre tank will be installed and fitted with new fast flow solar submersible pumps to improve filling capability.
Pingelly	\$63,094	The project will take advantage of the increased sporting complex carpark/hard surface areas to optimise stormwater harvesting. The channelling of crucial stormwater to the Realm St Dam will assist in watering the grounds and the Town Oval for longer periods over summer as well as increasing supply for treatment and use on town resources.
Dumbleyung	\$42 560	Project will upgrade AA dam #401; "Tarin Rock Siding" since being handed vesting of the dam from the Water Corporation recently. The project will enhance emergency non-potable livestock water supplies in the Kukerin area of the Shire that is prone to dry conditions and is not connected to the scheme pipeline.
Kulin	\$100 000	Project will construct a new 25,000 cubic metre capacity dam along with an eight hectare roaded catchment. The dam will be located just off the Pingaring-Varley Road, on the outskirts of the Pingaring town to the east that is vulnerable to dry conditions. The new dam will be equipped with a new solar pump and 275 kilolitre capacity tank, along with a standpipe for farmers to easily access the water.



Ravensthorpe	\$67 437	Project will upgrade the Fitzgerald Dam which is located to the eastern border of the shire. The project will enhance emergency non-potable livestock water supplies in the Ravensthorpe area. The project will provide an extensive refurbishment to the approximate four and a half hectare catchment, with a large solar pump placed on the main dam to enable easy access for farmers and the Ravensthorpe Bush Fire Brigade to the 20,000 kilolitre capacity dam. A small refurbished solar pump on the small 5,000 kilolitre capacity dam will also be fitted with new solar panels and pipe infrastructure to be used as a backup source to fill the tank.
Dumbleyung	\$100 000	The Kukerin Stock Dam project will enhance this important emergency non-potable livestock water supply in the Kukerin area of the Shire. The dam will be desilted and the catchment upgraded to optimise rainfall runoff and storage capacity. The installation of two 250 kilolitre storage tanks with two outlet sizes along with a new solar pump system will cater for a variety of water carting capabilities including emergency livestock and firefighting as well as Shire water needs.

**Grand Total: \$541,512**

**Dry Season Works by Shire**

Summary of dry season site works undertaken since March 2019 to 30 June 2020 Expenditure (excluding GST) \$1,504,456.17

**STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS  
FOR PERIOD 1 JANUARY 2020 TO 31 MAY 2020**

	<u>Actual</u> <u>For Year</u>	<u>Estimate</u> <u>For Year</u>
<b>RECEIPTS</b>		
Membership		
Associations (18 @ \$300)	0.00	5,400
Individuals (3 @ \$150)	0.00	450
Previous Year	<u>67.00</u>	134
Interest Earned	<u>0.84</u>	2
<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>	<u><u>\$67.84</u></u>	<u>5,986</u>
<b>PAYMENTS</b>		
Meeting Expenses		
Special Meeting	305.00	305
Teleconference	<u>189.38</u>	300
Bank Fees		0
Secretarial Service	<u>1,391.42</u>	5,000
<b>TOTAL PAYMENTS</b>	<u><u>\$1,885.80</u></u>	<u>5,605</u>
<b>CASH SUMMARY</b>		
Opening Balance	2,315.60	2,316
Plus Receipts	<u>67.84</u>	5,986
	2,383.44	8,302
Less Payments	<u>1,885.80</u>	5,605
<b>Closing Balance</b>	<u><u>\$497.64</u></u>	<u>2,697</u>
<b>BANK RECONCILIATION</b>		
Cheque Account Balance (as at 29/5/2020) (Westpac)	687.02	
Plus Deposits made but not shown on Statement	<u>0.00</u>	
	687.02	
Less Cheques issued but not shown on Statement	<u>189.38</u>	
<b>Balance as per Cash Book</b>	<u><u>\$497.64</u></u>	



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Robert Dew  
EXECUTIVE OFFICER