

MINUTES – MEETING THREE

SOUTH WEST WATER FORUM

10.30 am – 2.30 pm
28th September 2006

Karri Valley Resort
Pemberton

Attendees:

David Reid	Busselton Water
Doug Hall	Irrigation Association of Australia
Chris Scott	Fruit Growers Association
Rod Whittle	Leeuwin Environment Centre
Sue Walker	PGA
Barbara Dunnett	Shire of Nannup
Damien Hills	SW Catchments Council
Tony Brun	SW Catchments Council
Leonie Offer	Trees South West
Steve Dilley	WAFF
John Omodei	Warren Water Advisory Committee
Michael Wright	Water Corporation
Patrick Coutts	Wine Industry Association

Other attendees:

John Loney	Department of Water (DoW – Chair
Kelly Hudson	DoW – Perth Office
Louise Stelfox	DoW – Perth Office
Wayne Tingey	DoW – Regional Office
Mick Owens	DoW – Regional Office

Apologies

Don Punch	South West Development Commission
Tom Busher	Executive Officer, South West Water Forum

Welcome and Introductions – John Loney (DoW)

- Welcome to members
- Introduction of new and proxy members : Patrick Coutts, Doug Hall, Michael Wright, Chris Scott, John Omodei
- Introduction of new DoW team member – Louise Stelfox. Will be working on South West Water Plan while Kelly is on maternity leave
- Housekeeping
- Agenda Review

Update on State Water Plan – John Loney (DoW)

Power Point Presentation

Questions from Forum Members

Q1. Will the State and Regional plans be able to deal with the complexity of issues especially drainage.

A1. – Department of Water

Regional plans will develop priorities and identify hot spots. Confident we can do these. New funding has been received by department for drainage management and there is a 4yr timetable to get statutory drainage plans done. Drainage planning will look at decision making for both surface and groundwater drains.

Q2. What about saline wheatbelt drainage?

A1. – Department of Water

It is necessary to develop a governance framework and drainage design for both the wheatbelt and urban areas. This is being developed.

Q3. Is urban drainage only about Perth metro area?

A3. – Department of Water

No, urban drainage also means rural urban areas such as Bunbury etc. Terminology on slides is a little out of date – drainage is now categorised under headings of urban, coastal and inland.

Q4. Concern expressed that drinking water source protection and fit for purpose objectives in 'State Water Plan will make drinking water a priority with no regard for other users.

A4.

Water availability (and quality issues) or all users is considered by the department. Water allocation plans for instance will look at the water needs of all users including the environment in trying to achieve equitable water sharing.

Q5. An opinion expressed that the water reform blueprint (out for consultation during September) is really only relevant to cooperatives and not self-suppliers. Felt not relevant to groups who feel they 'self-manage' such as Warren.

A5.

Department does recognise the need to deal with concerns of all types of water users. There are specific issues for each group. The water reform blueprint does deal with state level broad policy. The department is looking closely at detailed implementation issues with regard to future legislation and policy development. Was pointed out that DoW does the management in the Warren district.

Q6. Comment that self-supply areas haven't been consulted enough and some concerns about one-size-fits-all approach to water reform. Want differences between different user groups acknowledged with flexibility in planning. Would like more chance for more input into NWI implementation planning.

A6.

DoW recognises need to be flexible and will be developing detailed policy that reflects this. WA is negotiating with NWI on specific points where WA may take a different approach to other states. NWI does allow for some flexibility in approaches and interpretation. While not intending to do a major public consultation on development of the NWI implementation plan, it should be possible to provide an overview of the areas that the WA plan will cover.

Q7. Water reform seems to focus on irrigated agriculture. What about the water needs of dry land agriculture? These are never mentioned

A7.

Dry land agriculture isn't explicitly mentioned but Department is aware of varying needs of dry land farmers including access to reliable stock and domestic water as well as such issues as the value of overland flood flows for rangeland health etc. Basic water rights are important and will be actively considered and protected in future water management legislation, policy and planning.

Q8. What about domestic use for chalets, farms etc?

A8.

These are also considered part of domestic rights and water needs for these would be considered in detailed policy positions before legislation is developed,

Q 9. There is a public interest in environmental water. How about a comment from WAFF on giving enough water to the environment? Landowners may feel like they are losing out.

A9. WAFF – Steve Dilley

Most farmers are nervous about environmental water needs, some concerns they will have to drain dams. They also recognise climate change and want everyone to 'share the pain' when supplies diminish.

DoW – the department also recognises that it is not natural to have rigid water rules supplying the same environmental water needs every year. Every year in the natural environment is variable. Have to try and mimic that variability. Environmental water provisions are important and there may be increased social demands for greater environmental water because of the unique character of the south west.

DoW – experience with water planning in eastern states has shown that when we have different groups sitting down together – farmers and environmental groups – it is possible to develop cooperative local solutions where everyone feels they've achieved an equitable agreement – even in difficult times. Plenty of optimism that groups like the Forum could achieve like wise results.

SWCC – having certainty in the framework and process is important so that all rights can be protected. And then access to water won't change just because of socio-political lobbying. Trade-offs could occur but under an open and transparent process so that if it impacts on other users rights, the costs can be accounted for and managed,.

Review of Future Trends Paper and Question Time - John Loney (DoW) Power Point Presentation

Questions from Forum Members

Q1. Councils disagree with WAPC projections for growth and is a point of concern. Concerns about the validity of models used for rural population growth by WAPC. Suggested that councils be contacted for more information. Suggestion that could present a scenario of 'supported' growth for south west rather than any growth limited scenarios.

A1. – Department of Water

Agreed to speak to councils and see if more information on projections was available to allow development of scenario trends for growth. Asked that attending council members please send on any relevant information they might have about this matter.

Q2. Concern about the spread of the data.

A2. – Department of Water

Department acknowledge flaws in data, working with projections that are sometimes several years old, assumptions may be flawed or invalid over long periods. Limited in the amount of data we have available.

Will add some comments about types of changes that can affect potential water demand across agriculture – macro economic forces, global trade, oil prices etc. what document does show is that there is great need for

flexibility when dealing with future demand and a need to use water very wisely to ensure that there is room available for future changes in demand and potential growth to support industry.

Q3. Suggested contact industry /sector groups for more detailed projections where possible.

A3. – Department of Water
Department will try and source this information.

Facilitated Workshop Discussion on Objectives

Lunch Break

South West Water Plan: Next Stages – Kelly Hudson (DoW)

Power Point Presentation

Meeting closed at 2.30pm.

Next meeting to be held February/March 2007. Venue and date to be decided.