



Hunter River Salinity Trading Scheme Operations Committee – Meeting Minutes

Meeting:	Hunter River Salinity Trading Scheme Operations Committee Meeting	Date:	Thursday 14 November 2024
Location:	Singleton Library	Time:	10:00-12:00
Last Meeting Date:	7 June 2024	Next Meeting Date:	May 2025
Present:	<p> Lisa Richards – Discharge License Holder – BHP Mt Arthur Coal Dr WEJ Paradise (observer due to technology issues) Andrew Speechly – Discharge License Holder - Yancoal MTW Christopher Rooney – Discharge Licence Holder – AGL Macquarie Ken Bray – Irrigators Representative – Hunter Valley Water Users Association Dr Thava Palavanisami – Environmental Representative – University of Newcastle Danielle Doughty - NSW DCCEEW Representative (Mgr. Coastal Waters) Rob Cavallaro – Local Land Service Representative Mahmood Khan – Water NSW Partha Saha – Water NSW Ben Mulhearn – Water NSW Audrey Yim – EPA Vanessa Arnold – EPA (Acting Chair) Celeste Forestal – EPA Michael Fitzgerald – EPA Kate Davison – EPA Jesse Jones – EPA Nico Soetrisno – EPA </p>		
Apologies:	<p> Robyn Parker Gary Mulhearn Callan Cutliffe Corrie Ford Craig White Glenn Lyons </p>		
Guests:	<p> Alison Thompson – EPA Melissa Bell - EPA </p>		

Agenda items:

Agenda Item	Main Discussion Points	Actions																																																												
1. Welcome, Acknowledgment of Country																																																														
2. Apologies and declarations of interest	No declarations of interest were announced. Wej Paradice was overseas and due to technical issues was not Chairing the meeting as usual.																																																													
3. Introductions from all new members/attendees – New EPA team	Celese Forestal, Unit Head Operations will be leading the team looking after HRSTS Program from 2025 onwards (program administration and compliance).																																																													
4. Actions from Previous Meeting - Update	<table border="1" data-bbox="411 651 1015 1413"> <thead> <tr> <th>Action Item No</th> <th>Action</th> <th>Party Responsible</th> <th>Status</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>EPA to publish annual performance report to EPA website with more details about emergency discharge opportunities.</td> <td></td> <td>Complete, report is now on the website</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>WaterNSW to assist the EPA in ongoing investigations into March/April 2023 EC spike.</td> <td></td> <td>Complete, inconclusive</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>EPA Operations liaise with Gary Mulhearn on 400EC matter.</td> <td></td> <td>Matter can be addressed via a licence variation, advice provided to Gary</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>EPA to update where appropriate the progress on the Regulation Review to NSW Minerals Council.</td> <td></td> <td>On-going</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>EPA to seek internal advice on confirmation for where funds for the scientific study should come from.</td> <td></td> <td>Complete. 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Currently the proposal is too broad. 	Action Item No	Action	Party Responsible	Status	1	EPA to publish annual performance report to EPA website with more details about emergency discharge opportunities.		Complete, report is now on the website	2	WaterNSW to assist the EPA in ongoing investigations into March/April 2023 EC spike.		Complete, inconclusive	3	EPA Operations liaise with Gary Mulhearn on 400EC matter.		Matter can be addressed via a licence variation, advice provided to Gary	4	EPA to update where appropriate the progress on the Regulation Review to NSW Minerals Council.		On-going	5	EPA to seek internal advice on confirmation for where funds for the scientific study should come from.		Complete. Legal and finance advice sought.	6	EPA will consult with stakeholders and planning out of session meeting to develop guidance on the emergency discharge defence provision in the POEO (HRSTS) Regulation.		On-going. 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To be considered for a future meeting with new committee	<p data-bbox="1161 618 1453 707">EPA to carry forward in-progress action items to next meeting:</p> <ol data-bbox="1161 757 1453 1048" style="list-style-type: none"> 1. EPA to distribute advice on the 400EC matter to NSW Minerals Council. 2. EPA to circulate Legal and finance advice that show how scheme funds cover the scientific study
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<p>6. Summary of key findings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPA Presentation • VA presented the HRSTS annual performance summary • Discharge opportunities were greatly reduced in comparison to last year and on par with a normal year. • Mt Arthur typically extract more water than they discharge and don't picture frequent discharges outside of very high rainfall conditions. This kind of information would help advise and fine tune the water model for future • Water NSW suggested that participants who are not intending to discharge during a specific block/period of time to notify WaterNSW, as it provides greater opportunity for future planning 	<p>3. EPA to talk to WaterNSW about how best to address this issue of sharing discharge planning information, and to add this information to the water model and operations of the HRSTS.</p>
<p>7. HRSTS Expenditure FY23/24</p>	<p>EPA Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AY presented HRSTS expenditure for FY23/24 • Cost mostly unchanged, however includes: recent 4G modem upgrades, and inclusion of additional gauges • Yearly scheme costs around \$1 million per year • The biannual credit auction raised around \$2.5 million, which goes towards the next two years' expenses. 	
<p>8. WaterNSW Update</p>	<p>WaterNSW Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dry to average conditions • November to January outlook: above average rainfall • Glenbawn Dam has a Flood Mitigation Zone 120 GL of additional storage. Currently WNSW manages this capacity - the discharge of excess water could in future be managed to better support of the Scheme and supply additional flow when participants are in need of discharge • When River Register notifications are issued (SMS) to participants, a table of the river register is now included along with the link to Water Insights page. • In process of building a rain-on-ground model for better forecasting of flow and salinity. Once approved this may take around 6-7 months to develop and integrate. Currently the water model relies only on real time flow data input into the water model to determine salinity which is slower. • Improvements have been made in flow forecasting model 	<p>4. WaterNSW to provide technical detail on what is included in the rain-on-ground model. (run off and soil saturation)</p>
<p>9.Environmental Water Releases</p>	<p>EPA Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Water Releases are planned for a three-week period over April, May, and June. During this time there are typically less discharge opportunities for HRSTS. • LR advised during typical flow periods, restricting HRSTS discharges may not be a problem however during high rainfall periods when the need to discharge grows, this could lead to significant operational challenges. LR recommended a 	<p>5. EPA to undertake further assessment on EWR and how HRSTS discharges should be managed. Note: prior to any decision, EPA will need to consult with industry participants.</p>

	<p>considered approach that balance the needs of industry and the environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AY advised further consultation would be needed with the objective of developing a policy that is clear and transparent. • WaterNSW highlighted that during periods of high flow when there is a HRSTS discharge opportunity, flow conditions are sufficient to raise water levels (Liddell weir) to support fish migration. As such EWR may be suspended (as experience last June). • RC mentioned that the EWR are not just to support fish migration but to aid the regeneration of River Red Gums 	
10. General Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency dilution arrangement, procedure, and guidance were not presented due to online technical difficulties • New committee to be selected for 2025. 	6. EPA to circulate update on emergency dilution arrangement, procedures and guidance
11. Next Meeting	Next meeting in May 2025	7. Date will be decided by EPA and circulated to the new Committee.