

Darwin Region Water Supply Program

# Community Reference Group Communique



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The Community Reference Group (CRG) keeps the Darwin Region Water Supply Program open and accessible to the community. The committee aims to provide updates, hear your concerns, and make sure projects reflect environmental, cultural, social and economic values. The seventh meeting was held on 9 July 2025 at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. A summary of the meeting is provided below.

## MANTON DAM RETURN TO SERVICE UPDATE

The Manton Dam Return to Service Project has significantly progressed.

As of July, the inlet tower and pump station demolition were complete, the pump station foundation had been built, and inlet tower upgrade works were at 75% finished.

On the 22 km pipeline, materials have been delivered, trenching and installation are well advanced at 72%, and 5 of the 8 planned road under bores were completed.

At the Strauss Water Treatment Plant, the design is finalised, bulk earthworks for the access road had been complete, and the process plant building had been erected with the crane installed. Construction of the wash-water tank and the base for 2 clear water tanks is complete, while the Dissolved Air Flotation and Filtration treatment plant is now under construction.

The Recreation Management Plan, Catchment Management Plan, and the Heritage Management Plan are all under development for the Manton Dam project.

In its environmental referral for the Manton Dam Return to Service project, Power and Water committed to continuing the water release of 30 litres per second to the Manton River during the dry season to maintain the existing flow in the river. Stakeholder engagement for the project has reinforced the importance of the Manton River.



# ADELAIDE RIVER OFF-STREAM WATER STORAGE UPDATE

## Groundwater monitoring

The Regional Monitoring Bore Network is now being established for the Adelaide River Off-Stream Water Storage (AROWS) project. This network will measure groundwater levels, monitor water quality, assess aquifer pressure, and support broader environmental studies.

Data from these bores will provide information to support sustainable water management, ensure regulatory compliance and deliver valuable scientific insight.

## Environmental assessment

The referral for AROWS was submitted to the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority. In response, 22 public submissions were received, 10 from government agencies and 55 individuals (including a group submission from the Lake Bennett Body Corporate). The Final Terms of Reference for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) have now been published and will guide the next 2-3 years of studies for the project. During the public submission period, community feedback highlighted concerns about environmental impacts, effects on communities and businesses, construction challenges, economic justification, water security, and cultural heritage.

Along with the installation of the groundwater monitors, key priorities for 2025 include hydraulic and hydrodynamic modelling to determine the project's area of influence and baseline environmental surveys. This involves field work such as aquatic and terrestrial ecology studies.

## Catchment management and water quality

AROWS will draw water from the Adelaide River Catchment (7,290 km<sup>2</sup>), with more than half of this flow coming from its 4,470 km<sup>2</sup> upstream area. The project includes 3 catchments: the inundation area, the basin, and the upstream catchment—where most of the water originates.

Over the coming years, baseline studies will be carried out to understand potential water quality risks. The first round of sampling is planned for the 2025/26 wet season, with samples collected across the catchment to identify hazards. These will be investigated, risk assessed, and managed to ensure safe, reliable drinking water for the community.

## Engineering and design

The concept design for the AROWS project is underway, providing the first structured definition of the project's key infrastructure components and how they may function together. This early design phase integrates initial engineering with preliminary hydrology, geotechnical insights, environmental and cultural constraints, and land tenure considerations to confirm that the project remains technically viable.

It will set out the core functional requirements and provide high-level cost and schedule evaluations to guide future planning. Once complete, the concept design will establish a baseline that can be tested and refined, prior to the Reference Design being finalised. The outputs from this early concept work will inform the next phases of design and assessments that will support future investment decisions.



## MIDDLE ARM PRECINCT UPDATE

The Middle Arm Precinct is being planned as a place where industry can operate with confidence, while meeting strict environmental standards that give the community assurance about activities on site. The project is still in the early stages of master planning, concept design and a strategic environmental assessment, which together will shape how the precinct develops over time.

As planning progresses, it is anticipated that additional water supply will be required to support future development within the precinct. A more refined understanding of this demand will be built over time through ongoing planning and engagement with potential industry proponents.

The master planning for the Middle Arm Precinct includes consideration of water supply source options, including the Darwin Region Water Supply Program through the Darwin water supply system. Planning pathways for both projects are being closely coordinated to ensure strategic alignment and to collectively support a resilient, reliable and sustainable water future for the Northern Territory.

## ADELAIDE RIVER WATER PLAN UPDATE

A water allocation plan is being developed for the Adelaide River catchment and is expected to be completed in 2026. The plan will be informed by science, developed with the community, and aims to keep the Adelaide River free-flowing while maintaining environmental, cultural, and social values that support our Territory lifestyle.

The plan will guide how water is shared, balancing the needs of the environment, Aboriginal cultural and economic values, recreation, drinking water, agriculture, aquaculture, and industry. Research is already underway to better understand the catchment, with input from a water advisory committee helping to shape the plan. A draft plan will be released for public consultation, giving the community the chance to have their say before the final plan is submitted to the Minister in 2026.





## CRG Members

Members present at the CRG meeting included:

- Darryl Day, Chair
- Andrew Bourne, NT Farmers
- Stephen Hoyne, Litchfield Council
- Sharon Hillen, Coomalie Community Government Council
- Andrew MacKay MLA, Member for Goyder
- Glen Hingley, Chamber of Commerce

## Meeting Schedule

The next CRG meeting is scheduled for November 2025.

## Contact information

Community members are encouraged to contact their CRG representatives directly to voice matters related to the program. Alternatively, community members can contact the NT Government project team directly via email or calling (08) 8999 5106.

Stage 1 of the Darwin Region Water Supply Program is jointly funded by the Australian and Northern Territory governments, delivered in partnership with the Power and Water Corporation.



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