

Community Reference Group Communique



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The fifth meeting of the Darwin Region Water Supply Program (the Program) Community Reference Group (CRG) began with a smoking ceremony and Welcome to Country facilitated by the Kenyon family.

The CRG were privileged to receive such a welcome and learn more about the area in which they live and work. The CRG was held at Wetland View Top Visitor Centre. The centre is located at the top of the Ludawei (Beatrice Hill), one of the highest points in the area. From the observation deck, you can see over the floodplains of the Adelaide River.

ADELAIDE RIVER WATER ALLOCATION PLAN

Simon Cruickshank from the Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security (DEPWS) presented on the Adelaide River Water Allocation Plan, the draft of which is expected to be complete in June 2025.

The Adelaide River Water Allocation Plan is set to establish a Water Advisory Committee this year. While the Water Allocation Plan is predominantly a surface water plan it will establish the relationship between ground water and surface water. Ecological investigations are underway, split into two stages:

Stage 1: Identification and mapping of ecological assets

- Delivered by Charles Darwin University and DEPWS

Stage 2: Ecological indicator species and ecological water requirements

- Delivered by DEPWS, a Technical Advisory Panel, and consultants.

A procurement process is underway for delivery of the cultural values assessment. It is anticipated that Aboriginal members of the Water Advisory Committee will review the assessment.

MANTON DAM RETURN TO SERVICE

The CRG were given an update on the Manton Dam Return to Service Project. Earlier in the year, the project received feedback from the Northern Territory Environmental Protection Authority (NT EPA) on the Power and Water Corporation's Referral submission. The feedback stated that the project "does not have the potential for a significant impact on the environment due to the duration, magnitude and extent of the proposed activities, and the inclusion of well-established management and mitigation measures in the referral, for the planning, construction and operational phases of the proposed action." This provided the required environmental approval for the project to proceed.

When complete, the refurbished reservoir will provide an additional 7,300 megalitres a year into the Darwin region water supply system. The Return to Service project includes:

- Upgrade of the existing intake tower
- Construction of a new 20ML/day pumping station at Manton Dam
- A 22km 600mm pipeline from Manton to Strauss
- Construction of a new 20ML/day water treatment plant at Strauss.

A recreation management plan for Manton will be developed as the dam will continue to be a recreational resource for the Darwin community. The new Strauss Water Treatment plant will adopt state of the art technology to ensure the dam meets stringent drinking water quality standards. The project is expected to be completed in the second half of 2026.

Following engagement with downstream landowners, the feedback received by Power and Water Corporation is that the plan to maintain a minor discharge into Manton River is acceptable. Power and Water Corporation will adjust their extraction licence accordingly through meetings with the DEPWS.

ADELAIDE RIVER OFF-STREAM WATER STORAGE

Community Engagement

Community engagement remains a key focus for the Adelaide River Off-stream Water Storage (AROWS) project. The team has been busy providing briefings to industry, First Nations engagement has been undertaken alongside Northern Land Council, letterbox dropping in areas surrounding AROWS, pop ups at local shopping centres and planning for upcoming events including the show circuit, local markets and another BBQ at Lake Bennett.



Concept Design

Information was provided on the Airborne Electromagnetic (AEM) Surveys to be taken over and surrounding the AROWS site. AEM survey is a non-invasive form of survey that is conducted by a helicopter carrying a sensor 30 metres above the ground to measure the natural variations in the electrical properties of the soil, rocks and water. The information collected in the AEM survey will help streamline future ground investigations, increase certainty of geological and geotechnical models, reduce design and construction risks and provide a thorough understanding of the land within and surrounding the AROWS site. You can read more about AEM surveys [here](#).

Jocelyn Ellero from SMEC Australia, who are delivering the AROWS concept design, provided an update on their work since commencing on the Project in December 2023. At the time of the CRG, SMEC had completed project scope review and assurance, project risk register, basis of design, site investigation area mapping and preliminary environmental constraint considerations. SMEC will continue to undertake surveys and studies to feed into the concept design process.

SMEC have secured technical experts in niche areas of the design to assist the established team. Nine staff are based in the Darwin office with a high focus to engaging local sub-consultants and sub-contractors.



Environment

Natalie Fries from GHD, AROWS environment consultant, provided an update on the progress of the Environmental Referral.

The pre-referral assessment found that 11 out of 14 NT EPA environmental factors were identified to be included in the environmental assessment. Since then, the GHD team have been busily working away to undertake terrestrial and aquatic ecology studies and extensive stakeholder engagement. Environmental DNA (eDNA) was used to detect the species present in the area from samples of soil or water, find out more about eDNA [here](#). Electrofishing was also used and has many benefits over traditional netting. Electrofishing involves passing an electrical current through water, stunning fish so that they counted and identified. Fish recover quickly, and are released back into their environment. Following these initial studies, environmental design principles will be considered during the concept design for further impact avoidance and minimisation to as low as reasonably practicable. Next steps for the Referral include completing the hydrological modelling and determining the area of influence (using a maximum water extraction scenario) and to finalise and submit the environmental referral and draft Terms of Reference.





CRG Members

Members present at the CRG meeting included:

- Darryl Day, Chair
- Graham Kenyon, Custodian of Limilngan-Wulna land and local business owner
- David Ciaravolo, Chief Executive Officer Amateur Fisherman's Association NT
- Kezia Purick MLA, Member for Goyder
- Greg Troughton, NT Farmers (As an observer until formal appointment).
- Stephen Hoyne, Litchfield Council
- Ruth Palmer, Property Council of Australia and Lake Bennett Community Association Inc
- Emma Dunne, Coomalie Council (proxy for Sharon Hillen)

Meeting Schedule

The next CRG meeting is scheduled for September 2024.

More information

If you would like to receive more information regarding the Program and upcoming events in your community, sign up to the community e-newsletter [here](#).

Contact details

Community members are encouraged to contact their CRG representative to voice matters related to the Program by emailing CRG.waterinfrastructure@nt.gov.au.

Alternatively, community members can contact the NT Government Program Team directly by email on WaterInfrastructure.DIPL@nt.gov.au or by calling 08 8999 5106.



Sign up to receive Community Updates on the Darwin Region Water Supply Program.