

Tintinara Coonalpyn Water Allocation Plan Review Stakeholder Advisory Group Minutes

Meeting No. 6, 19 March 2026, 2:00 – 4:30 pm
Coorong District Council Board Room, Tintinara

Objectives

- Presentation and discussion on TC PWA hydrogeology and resource condition with DEW Senior Hydrogeologist as per Action item 3.2.

Attendees:

Group Attendees – Dr Jonathon Sobels (Chair), Adam Zacker (left at 3.05pm), Campbell Foote, Graham Gates, James De Barro, Jim Rowntree, John Young, Rodney Lush

LC Landscape Board Staff Attendees – Sue Botting, Chelsea Burns, Ryan Judd

Department for Environment and Water Staff Attendees – Dr Victor Waclawik

Apologies – Tracey Strugnell

Welcome and agenda

The Chair welcomed everyone and thanked Group members and staff for their attendance and gave an acknowledgement of country.

Agenda check and minutes

Discussion:

- Correction of duplication of Graham Gates in attendees and apologies, Graham was an apology.
- There were no requests for changes to the draft minutes as tabled.

Meeting 5 minutes confirmed as true and correct Moved by: James De Barro. Seconded by: Jim Rowntree. All were in favour.

Hydrogeology of the Tintinara Coonalpyn PWA

Victor Waclawik, Senior Hydrogeologist DEW Water Science, presented on the hydrogeology of the PWA and condition of the aquifer.

Discussion:

Geology and hydrogeology

- Question raised from the group: Is the granite basement connected/uniform across the Limestone Coast? There are granite ridges and basements across the region but whether they are of the same age or formation could impact their connectedness.
- The Group discussed the Kynoch management area in the confined aquifer. There is no allocation/TML. There is potential that this could be a viable resource if the unconfined aquifer above in Sherwood management area experiences salinisation. That had been flagged as a potential risk due to land clearance approximately 25 years ago. It has been flagged that impact of land clearance leading to salinity issues could take 30 to 50 years.
- It was raised by the Group as to what the rate of recharge is within the PWA. It isn't clear in the Plan but likely very minimal. Groundwater management in South Australia is generally moving away from allocating a % of annual average recharge. Recharge is highly variable and impacted by many factors. Groundwater modelling allows recharge to be considered but also how the aquifer responds to extraction. Question taken on notice to confirm recharge used in current or previous Plan.
- Group members involved in historical iterations of the Plan, raised that due to risk of salinisation of the resource it has generally been treated as a non-renewable resource. From a policy perspective we need to consider how this is treated in the future. The last 20 years of salinity records have shown that irrigation doesn't appear to be having a significant impact. Salinity trends also seem to be relatively stable across the majority of current monitoring wells. West of Tintinara Coonalpyn PWA getting more saline, previous policy considerations have been avoiding drawing this water east through irrigation.

Monitoring

- There was general discussion around monitoring rationalisation and changes in salinity monitoring over time. There are challenges in using existing equipped or in use bores for observation well monitoring. The Group discussed the value in irrigators sending in salinity samples when irrigating as being undertaken in other PWAs.
- There are monitoring bores around the Cooke plains and Coomandook that are monitored by CTLAP which may have data to fill a gap in obswell network if needed. Only water levels monitored, not salinity.
- The Group discussed the gaps in monitoring obswells on the eastern side of Coonalpyn and Tauragat management areas. Also on the western side. No extraction on more western side but data could still be valuable eg potentiometric surface which shows lateral flow by contours. Water flows perpendicular to contour from high to low, east to west.

Modelling

- It was raised by the Group what are the future plans for a groundwater model for the Tintinara-Coonalpyn PWA? There isn't an appropriate existing model that can be used for the entirety of the PWA so will need to build a new model that covers the PWA. Currently flagged to build model in the next financial year that can be used if the Plan goes to amendment.
- It was raised by the Group how relevant is the current hydrogeological assessment? It's what we currently have and is being applied based on what we have. There is a plan to review the assessment process which is used across multiple PWAs and look into whether there is a better approach.
- The Group discussed within the previous plan there was an assumption that the level of current allocation is sustainable and whether this will change moving forward. This is a discussion that is happening across a lot of PWAs where use is much lower than allocation.

The information that informs what is sustainable might be improved with groundwater modelling for example. Modelling across most regions is showing full allocation would detrimentally impact resource. The short and long term socio-economic impacts need to be considered.

- It was raised can the modelling test at what level of extraction or timeline could the reversal of groundwater flow occur? Broadly yes it could with variations to extraction levels in model scenarios.

Any other business

Discussion:

- It was raised that in previous WAP processes, a DEW hydrogeologist was at most of the meetings. Will there be the opportunity or resource in this process as well? Likely at those times DEW was responsible for the development of Plans which now is the responsibility of Landscape Boards. Resourcing within DEW is also a consideration. Can get answers to questions out of session and get hydrogeologist to attend meetings strategically. Will likely be more involved if the Plan goes to amendment.
- A question was asked whether across the Limestone Coast are trends between allocation and use similar where use is lower than allocation. Depends on the area, some are close to full allocation, others use is significantly lower than allocation. In general use is lower than allocation.
- Question taken on notice for DEW Science around sub aquifers in the confined aquifer. Seeking to understand how important they are across the PWA for risk and management noting current Plan mainly refer to sub aquifers in the Tauragat management area.

Next meeting date

- Next meeting dates:
 - Meeting 7: Thursday 16th April 2026 2.00-4.30pm.
 - Meeting 8: Thursday 28th May 2026 2.00-4.30pm.

Close of meeting

Meeting closed at 4.30pm

The Chair thanked the stakeholders and staff for attending.

Tintinara Coonalpyn Water Allocation Plan review
Stakeholder Advisory Group
Action Table

Action	TC WAP Stakeholder Advisory Group Actions	Status	Meeting 6 Update
1.1	To be provided to Group Members: • Presentations from Meeting 1 • Endorsed ToR and ground rules	Complete	
1.2	Provide further break down of TML allocation and use to show delivery supplement	Complete	
1.3	Delivery supplement explanation and licence example	Complete	
1.4	Licence authorisations (bundling/unbundling) explanation	Complete	
2.1	To be provided to Group members: • Presentations from Meeting 2 • Acronyms list	Complete	
2.2	Map of obswell locations for context of data and trends	Complete	
2.3	Confirm obswell bore purpose within the monitoring network ie specific obswell bores vs irrigation bores	Complete	
2.4	Allocation and use data breakdown/analysis including % use of licences. Heat maps of extraction (if able to be provided from DEW).	Complete	Follow up with DEW re additional heat maps of extraction. 2019-2022 previously provided.
2.5	To be followed up with DEW: • Current monitoring program in TCPWA, and what are they actually committed to doing as part of the regional program. • Further explanation/reason for decrease in number of wells for 10 year and static salinity trends. • Seek advice on potential influence and/or risk of hydrogeology to west of PWA and whether that could be contributing to rising water levels in Coonalpyn/Tauragat. • Confirm locations of observation wells in Ngarkat Conservation Park or explanation if none present in this area as part of network	Partially complete	Salinity monitoring summary provided to Group members and available on Group member portal. Further detail on historical salinity change provided at meetings 3 and 4. Hydrogeology influence from west of PWA and observation wells in Ngarkat raised as part of DEW presentation at meeting 6.

Action	TC WAP Stakeholder Advisory Group Actions	Status	Meeting 6 Update
3.1	Salinity monitoring: - To be raised at LC Landscape Board level and/or DEW water steering committee. - Continue ongoing liaison with DEW Science and Monitoring on salinity data availability and application, potential gaps and opportunities. - Request monitoring team to confirm purpose of use of obswell bores during next round of monitoring. - Seek DEW feedback on coverage and representativeness of current obswell network in TC PWA as part of evaluation/review.	Partially complete	Presentation to LC Landscape Board in December 2025. Salinity monitoring summary provided to Group members and available on Group member portal.
3.2	LC Landscape Board to request DEW hydrogeologist to present to Group to report on the TC PWA resource and condition	Complete	Presented at Meeting 6
3.3	Summary of key concepts to revisit recommendations for: - Holding licences - Active & expeditious use - Delivery supplement - flood	Ongoing	
4.1	Engage with industry groups for feedback on the Plan.	Complete	Update on all plans circulated February 2026. TC feedback call to industry scheduled for March 2026.
4.2	Summary of key concepts to revisit/recommendations for principles of: - Carry over - Seasonal variability - Rotational crop	Ongoing	
5.1	Provide Group some example/s of DEW hydrogeology presentations from other groups or PWAs.	N/A	To be removed.
5.2	To be followed up with DEW re hydro test: - If the assessment uses the previous 5 years, if there is not enough obs wells or not enough nearby that are relevant, how do they do the hydro test usefully. - What is the recharge value used for the management areas.	Ongoing	

Action	TC WAP Stakeholder Advisory Group Actions	Status	Meeting 6 Update
	- With rotational crops is the rotational allocation accounted for in a hydro test if a neighbour is bringing in water. - Example or more detail on how hydro test is applied.		
5.3	Summary of key concepts to revisit/recommendations for principles of: Trade	Ongoing	
6.1	Question on notice for DEW: - Sub aquifers in the confined aquifer. Risk and management. - Rate of recharge used in current or previous Plan.		

Tintinara Coonalpyn Water Allocation Plan review Stakeholder Advisory Group

Items identified to be revisited and/or for recommendation

Item number	TC WAP Stakeholder Advisory Group	Status	Meeting raised
1.	Salinity monitoring 10 year trends to 2025 from DEW only showed 2-3 obswells. This is insufficient for educated decisions to be made.	Revisit for formal recommendation	2
2.	Consider need for mandatory salinity readings/returns from licence holders.	Revisit	2 3
3.	Consider whether Delivery Supplement (DS) is still needed as a component or whether it could be simplified. DS-Flood still considered a relevant need and component for TC PWA. View to retain existing DS-flood allocations with no new.	Revisit Revisit for formal recommendation	2 3
4.	Holding licences no longer relevant and not current in PWA. View to manage intent through other mechanisms more aligned with legislation.	Revisit for formal recommendation	3
5.	Active and expeditious use no longer relevant for the PWA and was time specific. View to remove these principles.	Revisit for formal recommendation	3
6.	Carry over is highly valued. View that it remains appropriate as per current principles unless resource condition warrants more in depth review.	Revisit for formal recommendation	4
7.	<i>Seasonal variability principle is likely to remain appropriate in intent. Consideration of being available 2 years out of 5.</i> Revisit discussion: principle may warrant further review or redundancy based on view to sustainably manage the resource, reducing complexity of the Plan and other ways to manage business risk in established farming systems.	Revisit for formal recommendation	4 5
8.	<i>Rotational crop principle is likely to remain appropriate noting it is expected to have low use or expansion.</i> <i>Engage with industry groups prior to formal recommendation</i> Revisit discussion: subject to industry engagement, principle may warrant further review or redundancy	Revisit for formal recommendation	4 5

Item number	TC WAP Stakeholder Advisory Group	Status	Meeting raised
	based on view to sustainably manage the resource, low use and opportunity for expansion based on water quality in PWA, reducing complexity of the Plan and other ways to manage business risk in industry related to rotational crop principles.		
9.	Trade principles remain partially relevant for the PWA with view that the principles: • had some inconsistencies and redundant principles • may benefit from revision including how trade could be considered in an adaptive management framework linked to resource condition • should be revisited in consideration of sustainable allocation and resource condition.	Revisit	5

Confirmed