



National Irrigators' Council

Food · Fibre · Future

MINUTES

NIC General Meeting

8:30am – 3:30pm Thursday 21 July 2022

Nagambie Lakes Regatta Centre Conference Room, 66 Loddings Lane, Nagambie

Present		
Rosalie Auricht, Renmark Irrigation Trust	Jim Cush, Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association Inc	Jeremy Morton, Ricegrowers Association of Australia
Lockie Beech, Duxton Capital Australia	Craig Perkins, Coleambally Irrigation	Phillip Snowden, Murray Irrigation Limited
Matt Toscan, Murrumbidgee Groundwater Inc.	Mary Ewing, Lachlan Valley Water	Michael Pisasale, Murray Irrigation Limited
Iva Quarisa, Murrumbidgee Private Irrigators	Karen Hutchinson, Murrumbidgee Irrigation Ltd	Bernie George, Australian Food & Fibre
Linda Christesen, Ricegrowers' Association of Australia	John Shannon, Border Rivers Food and Fibre	Ian Cole, Barwon Darling Water
Graeme Kruger, Ricegrowers' Association of Australia	Simon Schutz, Barossa Infrastructure Ltd	Clifford Ashby, Coleambally Irrigation
Steven Ford, Pioneer Valley Water	Kim Morison, Argyle Capital Partners	Zara Lowien, Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association Inc
Michael Murray, Cotton Australia	Elizabeth Stott, Cotton Australia	Tracey Valenzisi, Murrumbidgee Irrigation Ltd
Dale Hollis, Bundaberg Regional Irrigators Group	Greg McCarron	Rebecca Turpie, NIC
Michael Drum, Macquarie River Food and Fibre	Matthew Bryant, Kilter Rural	Isaac Jeffrey, NIC
Ian Cole, Barwon Darling Water	Grant Tranter, Macquarie River Food and Fibre	
Apologies		
Mike Neville, WealthCheck	Jenny McLeod, Coleambally Irrigation	Bryan Ward, Irrigation Australia
Tim Jackson, Almond Board of Australia	Tony Baggio, Riverina Winegrape Growers	Jeremy Cass, Riverina Winegrape Growers
James John, RIT		

ITEM	MEETING
Item 1	Chairman: NIC General meeting open Welcome & overview of the day <ul style="list-style-type: none">Apologies & introductions
Item 2	Minutes of General Meeting held 17 February 2022 (papers) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Business arising (CEO)
RESO 1	<i>Dale Hollis moved:</i> <i>That the Minutes of the General meeting held on 17 February 2022 be accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</i> <i>Seconded by Steven Ford</i> CARRIED
Action 1	NIC to write to Federal Water Minister expressing concerns (see slides)
Item 3	Chairman & CEO reports (papers) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Reports taken as read

	<p>Jeremy and Isaac met online with the Water Minister and her senior water advisor today. A follow-up face-to-face meeting is scheduled for August.</p> <p>CEO Report</p> <p>SEE SLIDES</p> <p>Isaac: Let us know if you want us to meet with anyone</p> <p>Michael Murray: please send a reminder the day before drop-in sessions including the agenda of the session</p>
Action 1	Write to new CEO of MDBA to suggest/request (10 year conference??)
Item 4	<p>Treasurer's report and Financial Overview</p> <p>Net loss this year of \$43k due to increased office rent and staff</p>
Item 5	<p>Sub-committee reports: Committee Chairs <i>(from previous day's meetings)</i> (10 min each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IIO Sub-Committee: <i>(Chair, Karen Hutchinson)</i> <p>ACCC and the Murray-Darling Basin water markets inquiry - No report yet – promised in June. Schedule of charges – pass-through costs – 10 days notice must be given but the government doesn't give out the rates until after this timeframe. We will be requesting this ahead of the 10 days – Isaac to write to authorities about this issue. We also heard from Sharon from One Basin CRC who gave us an informative intro session.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy Sub-Committee: <i>(Chair, Dale Hollis)</i> <p>The new government is focussed on the environment and renewables. As a policy, NIC is agnostic to the source of electrons as long as they cost less than 16c (8c/8c). The water/energy nexus, as in how energy is used to put water on crops is what is important to us. The Ag Energy Taskforce helps us hunt as a pack to raise our profile. The Energy Charter has sponsored two annual roundtables so our voices can be heard at the company level. The Energy Charter has agreed to fund Joy Thomas to be Chair of the roundtables and looking at a role within the Ag Energy Taskforce.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Groundwater Sub-Committee: <i>(Chair, Mary Ewing)</i> <p>QLD – officials looking at closing the GL gap. NSW – activity by NRAR getting out to our members and emphasising they need to check approvals and licence agreements. Some areas not showing full recovery – issues around managing that. Report just been released (name of report?). We need to respond by mid-august. Brief discussion on CSG issues and draft NIC policy. Matt Pethybridge from Goulburn-Murray Water gave a presentation.</p>
Item 6	<p>Professor Michael Stewardson, Interim CEO, ONE basin CRC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of the CRC <p>Michael hopes for regular catchups with NIC and its members and welcomes and invites feedback.</p> <p>SEE SLIDES FOR PRESENTATION CONTENT</p> <p>Questions:</p> <p>Caren: modelling – 40% reduction in yield. This is overly cautious. How do you correct the pathway if it's significantly less? How are you working with models and data sets and can you correct?</p> <p>Michael Stewardson: there is a range. Unable to say exactly what is going to happen. Our focus is on supporting a foresighting approach and pathways into the future. How do we manage risks into the future without pre-empting them. Applies to water users, suppliers. Happy to receive all feedback even from those who are not partners.</p> <p>Isaac: Caren, you can direct feedback via NIC who will pass it on to the CRC</p> <p>Michael Murray: what role are you going to play in the policy space?</p> <p>Michael Stewardson: we have MDBA as a partner so we have a pathway. CRC is building a space where consensus can be built. The planning process for projects will be transparent. Partner forums. The commitment from our partners is collaborative.</p>
Item 7	<p>Members' Session on NIC Strategic Policy</p> <p>Coal Seam Gas Policy discussion</p>

	<p>We looked at VFF and NFF and other organisations who have CGS policies to come up with a list of principles. The members were asked if they are comfortable with us having this position. Discussions went back and forth, and it was decided that the working CSG position statement paper would be edited* and circulated and that unless there were objections raised during this process, the position statement would be adopted.</p> <p>*Suggested edits include: removing the preference for renewables, using the wording "stable, reliable and affordable energy supply", and stating that we are agnostic to the source of electrons.</p> <p>450/605 Basin discussion</p> <p>Discussions centred around on-farm efficiencies and that taking water out of the consumptive pool will hurt irrigators. It was decided that we need to bring our ideas together and take it to the government to show them the best way forward.</p> <p>General discussion notes:</p> <p>Members expressed the need to focus on key issues in general meetings and to use the drop-in sessions for broader discussions. It was also suggested we call a special members meeting any time the government makes any major policy changes. A 450 sub-committee was also suggested.</p>
Action	Board to schedule a 2 hour Key Issues / MDBA Sub-Committee meeting before the general meeting in October and report back to the council
Action	Two weeks for the members to submit their ideas for NIC to collate on the 450/605
Item 8	<p>Constitution Review</p> <p>There were questions around clause 7.24, that expanding the objects might not be aligned with the core purpose of NIC and it might make some members ineligible for membership. It has been suggested we form a constitution review sub-committee that develops a paper for discussion and to take to the October AGM.</p>
Item 9	<p>Warren Blyth, GM Water Services, Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the operations of GMW <p>SEE SLIDES</p>
Item 10	<p>Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA): Joe Davis MDBA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River operations • Discussion on overbank flows • Overview of deliverability risks and conveyancing losses <p>SEE SLIDES</p> <p>Caren: Where do you get the budget for sediment removal? Joe: Feasibility study – NSW paid a grant Caren: would sediment removal give better water returns? Joe: it might be counted towards efficiency measures Karen: where do delivery rights between states, channel, operational go? Joe: could become a thing we explore in the future. The river is constricted and we want to restore it to the size it was back in the 80s. Linda: can you ballpark what the efficiency dividend will be with sediment reduction? Joe: Roughly 5GL</p>
Item 11	<p>Lisa Gervasoni, Victorian Farmers' Federation (VFF)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewable energy, transmission and managing entry to farms <p>SEE SLIDES</p> <p>Steven: What is the compensation for farmers when energy infrastructure installed on their farms is old and needs to be removed? Lisa: we are asking for proper compensation for access, maintenance and remediation. It can cost up to \$1M to remove a wind turbine. If the company walks away, then the farmer would be responsible for removing the turbines. We think it needs to be something the government oversees to make sure if a company walks away that they make sure the sites are rehabilitated by the company and not the farmer</p>
Item 12	General meeting close