

Minutes

Venue: Purified Recycled Water Demonstration Plant
Gate 1, 240 Quakers Road, Quakers Hill

Date and time: 27 November 2023
9:30am – 2:00pm

Meeting title:	Customer and Community Reference Group
Independent Chair:	Abigail Goldberg
Attendees:	<p>Customer and Community Reference Group Members Anna Bacik – Community Representative Narelle Brown – Community Representative (<i>part</i>) Steven Collins – Community Representative Mary Karras – Ethnic Communities Council NSW Leigh Martin – Total Environment Centre Bruce McClelland – Business Western Sydney Douglas McCloskey – Public Interest Advocacy Centre Donna Rogers – Community Industry Group (Illawarra) Graham Turner – Council on the Ageing Ross Williams – Local Government NSW</p> <p>Sydney Water Roch Cheroux – Managing Director (<i>part</i>) Stuart Wallace – General Manager, Customer & Stakeholder Engagement Josh Isben – Head of Customer & Strategic Insights Izzy Kerr – Customer Research Manager Ben Newton – Manager Community Education & Corporate Social Responsibility (<i>part</i>) Sharon Bowyer – Senior Customer Governance Specialist</p> <p>Water Services Association of Australia Danielle Francis – Manager Policy and Strategy (<i>part</i>)</p> <p>Observers Cameron Robertson (Non-Executive Director) (<i>part</i>)</p>
Apologies/absent:	Stephen McMahon – Urban Development Institute of Australia Inaara Jindani – Community Representative
Meeting purpose:	Bi-monthly meeting according to CCRG Charter The CCRG works with Sydney Water at a strategic level to achieve the highest possible levels of customer focus within our practices. It supports Sydney Water to ensure that our business decisions, as set out in our strategy, enterprise plan and regulatory submissions, are in the best interests of all Sydney Water customers and the community and are shaped by them.
Desired outcome:	Discussion and feedback from CCRG Members

Agenda items

Item	Topic	Actions
1	<p>Purified Recycled Water (PRW) Demonstration Plant. The meeting was opened at 10.10am and the Chair welcomed participants and guests. Apologies were noted.</p> <p>Ben Newton acknowledged country and paid respects to elders past and present. Ben introduced James Harrington, Project Manager – Major Projects and Lauren Hodgetts, Community Education Officer who assisted with the presentation and Tour.</p>	

	<p>The presentation focused on the need for future proofing greater Sydney's water supply to have a sustainable, reliable and safe water supply, that is independent of rainfall. Sydney currently relies on rainfall for over 85% of its water supply, the other 15% comes from desalination.</p> <p>The PRW demonstration Plant is intended to give the community the opportunity to see how the purified recycled water treatment technology works and the range of environmental and cost benefits of using purified recycled water to supplement our drinking water supply.</p> <p>Questions raised by the CCRG members included: <i>Does the PRW demonstration plant only collect domestic wastewater?</i> Sydney Water explained that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the PRW demonstration plant collects all wastewater from the surrounding wastewater catchment area including from businesses, schools and hospitals. • the PRW project started with a review of the businesses within the wastewater catchment area and is well understood. <p>The site tour consisted of an overview of the education facility and a tour of the PRW Demonstration plant, where the triple treatment process was explained.</p>	
2	<p>Presentation - Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) Danielle Francis, Manager Policy and Strategy at WSAA gave a presentation on the global context for rainfall-independent water supply, including purified recycled water.</p> <p>Key points of the presentation included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All options of water contribute to water security and best practise is to have a diversified water supply with all options on the table. • There is a global shift to rainfall independent suppliers to complement traditional supply options • Factors that need to be considered when making decisions on water supply options • The importance of community education and engagement on purified recycled water. Visitor centres are an effective part of education. <p>Action: Sydney Water to share WSAA presentation</p> <p><i>Key points of discussion:</i></p> <p>CCRG members made the following comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community education and engagement is critical. • There is a need to engage with the media and politicians as key stakeholders so they clearly understand the need for all water options, the PRW technology and the community engagement processes. • What is WSAA's process to support and encourage PRW? <p>Danielle Francis outlined that WSAA have a role to play in talking to stakeholders (government members, shadow ministers, policy makers and the broader community) and in sharing information from around the world.</p>	Action: Sydney Water to share WSAA presentation

	<p>The Managing Director commented that Sydney Water is taking a multiple layered approach to engagement and education with media, government, community and schools.</p> <p>The Chair reflected that the CCRG had talked about the PRW demonstration plant during the year and that it was excellent to actually now see the demonstration plant and to hear more about the global context of Purified Recycled Water.</p> <p>The Chair and members thanked the Sydney Water team for the tour and WSAA for their presentation.</p>	
3	<p>MD and Director update</p> <p>The MD and Director, Cameron Robertson thanked the CCRG Chair and members for their contribution over the year.</p> <p>The MD provided an overview of ongoing Sydney Water activities, including in relation to community engagement, pricing and strategic planning.</p> <p>Cameron Robertson observed that the Economic Regulation Committee, of which his is Chair, placed a high value on the input of the CCRG received so far and would continue to draw on CCRG insights as the price proposal evolves.</p>	
4	<p>Minutes and declaration of interests</p> <p>The Minutes and action/issues log of the October 2023 CCRG meeting, which had been transmitted inter-session, were accepted.</p> <p>No interests were declared.</p>	
<p>Customer Engagement</p>		
5	<p>Customer Engagement Phase 5 – Verbal update and discussion</p> <p>Josh Isben and Izzy Kerr thanked the CCRG for their feedback on the Customer Engagement program ('Our Water, Our Voice'). Since the last CCRG meeting several of the CCRG subgroup members have made significant time commitments to reviewing materials as well as participation in Phase 5 rehearsals and observation at the customer sessions, which has been much appreciated and has helped inform the direction and form of the materials and engagement approach.</p> <p>Feedback from the CCRG subgroup members was sought.</p> <p><i>Key points of discussion:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehearsals were a good idea and had improved customer engagement. • While improvements were made, it was observed that some of it didn't land well and lessons can be learned for future phases. • The team are making the best of what they are able to do within the time constraints. <p>Sydney Water advised that the last Phase 5 session will be held in December 2023. Results will be reported on to the CCRG in 2024. Phase 6 will commence in February / March 2024.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the CCRG subgroup for their advice and inputs and complemented Sydney Water for their willingness to listen, adapt and transition without at any stage becoming defensive. As a result of this collaboration, transformational changes to the Customer Engagement program had been achieved, noting that further improvements are anticipated in 2024.</p>	

Year in Review		
6	<p>The Chair invited Ross Williams, who had been a member on the preceding Community Advisory Committee, to provide his reflections on the CCRG and how this has evolved over time.</p> <p>Ross observed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CCRG has been a transformational change. It is more structured, well organised and has an excellent, independent chair. • The CCRG is a diverse group that brings both technical expertise as well as a grass roots approach. • The CCRG now has direct access to the Managing Director, Board, senior managers and staff and is able to build positive working relationships and provide input directly to the Executive level of Sydney Water. • There are opportunities for Sydney Water to take on board the views from around the table, and this appears to be happening. • Reflected that the previous CAC committee members had pushed back that the new CCRG should retain ‘community’ in the title, rather than just being called a ‘customer reference group’. This is essential to reflect the role of the broader community. • Phase 5 of the Customer Engagement program highlights the journey that Sydney Water and the CCRG have been on. Ross congratulated and thanked Sydney Water for taking an agile and adaptive approach to customer engagement following CCRG input. It is a credit to the CCRG that has been able to be engaged in the process and to influence outcomes. • There are still opportunities to improve. As a representative of local government, Ross encourages a more viewpoint that encompasses the ‘silent majority’ not just speciality groups in order to address the views / needs of the large bulk of the community. <p>Ross thanked the Independent Chair for her leadership of the CCRG over the last year.</p> <p>The Chair then shared her reflections on the CCRG journey since its formation in November 2022, which will be reflected in an Annual Report for the group.</p>	
Year Ahead		
7	<p>CCRG 2024 Forward Plan</p> <p>Josh Isben shared a draft CCRG Forward Plan for 2024. The main themes of customer engagement, strategic planning and price proposal will continue and new topics on corporate performance and operational aspects will also be included.</p> <p><i>Key points of discussion:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a discussion on Sydney Water complaints and the complaints management process. <p>Action: CCRG members to provide feedback on Forward Plan.</p>	<p>Action: CCRG members to provide feedback on Forward Plan.</p>
Close		

8	<p>Stuart Wallace thanked the CCRG members and the Chair for their contribution and support to Sydney Water.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the CCRG members and the Sydney Water team for the efforts over the last year and wished everyone a happy and safe holiday season.</p>	
Year in Review Exercise		
9	<p>Following the formal close of the meeting, the Chair invited CCRG members to participate in a Year in Review exercise using a Harvard Technique called a 'compass points' exercise. Members were invited to respond to 2 questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are enough opportunities being provided for CCRG input with respect to – customer engagement, price proposal, strategic plans? • Is CCRG feedback being appropriately taken on board by Sydney Water? <p>In response members were broadly in agreement that enough opportunities for feedback were being provided and that this is being appropriately taken on board by Sydney Water. Specific comments will be considered by the Chair and Sydney Water in refining the Forward Plan.</p> <p>Action: Independent Chair and Sydney Water to review comments and to address feedback as part of the 2024 Forward Plan.</p>	<p>Action: Independent Chair and Sydney Water to review comments and to address feedback as part of the 2024 Forward Plan.</p>
10	Meeting closed at 2pm.	

2024 CCRG Meeting dates/times (Draft - subject to change)

Monday 19 February 2024 9am- 2pm*
Monday 8 April 2024 9am-2pm*
Monday 3 June 2024 9am-2pm*
Monday 5 August 2024 9am-2pm*
Monday 30 September 2024 9am-2pm*
Monday 11 November 2024 9am – 2pm*

*Length of CCRG meetings to be confirmed.