

Ti -Tree Water Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday 5th December 2016

Time: 1.00pm – 3.00pm

Venue: Central Desert Regional Council, Conference Room, Ti-Tree

Attendees: Bill Low (Chair) Robyn Grey Gardner, Vin Lange, Adam Davis, Rodney Baird, Robbie Henderson (DENR)

Apologies: John Thompson, Bevan Ball, Willy Lane

Absent: Dan Pepperill

1. Welcome & introduction to TTWAC

Bill Low welcomed everyone to the Ti-Tree Water Advisory Committee (TTWAC) and encouraged everyone to participate in a manner aimed at achieving a water management plan that would enable the best sustainable utilisation of the water basin. Compromise may be required but it should be fair and equitable.

Each participant was provided an opportunity to introduce themselves (see summary below). Apologies were acknowledged.

Vin Lange

- CEO Centrefarm / TopEnd Farm
- Enterprise owned by CLC & NLC
- Own some property & have agricultural interests in the Ti-Tree district
- Hold current water licenses
- Interested in providing economic opportunities for aboriginal people
- Have been involved in economic development scoping studies across the region, and involved in the establishment of a capital fund (pilot)

Rodney Baird

- Works coordinator for Central Desert Regional Shire, including Ti-Tree district
- Looks after infrastructure including roads and water, e.g. for outstations
- Employs essential service operators (ESOs) and undertakes work under contract to Power and Water
- Manage / use water for council properties, e.g. ovals

Adam Davis

- Water Systems Engineer with Power & Water (urban)
- Section looks after water supply (bores etc) for towns along the Stuart Hwy, including Ti-Tree and infrastructure up until 6 mile community (Pmara Jutunta)
- Separate from P&W Remote Operations who look after remote communities, however Adam can provide a conduit to engage with remote operations as required

Robyn Grey-Gardner

- Environmental scientists currently working with Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT)
- Previously with CSIRO
- Background in remote / indigenous livelihoods research, including within the Ti-Tree district

www.nt.gov.au

- Expertise in water quality, has worked internationally with World Health organisation

Bill Low (Chair)

- Environmental scientist / consultant with +40 years experience in Central Australia
- Has worked with many stakeholder in the Ti-Tree district and throughout the NT on environmental assessment, monitoring, licensing applications and reporting
- Bill declared that Low Ecological Services has some work interests in the Ti-Tree district, and assured the committee that these would be disclosed where relevant and Bill would step aside from discussions if appropriate

Robbie Henderson (DENR)

- Water planner with DENR
- Responsible for delivering the Ti-Tree Water Allocation Plan (TTWAP)
- Provides executive support for TTWAC
- Provides a conduit for matters raised by the committee to be taken back to the department
- Background in community development (non-government sector)

2. ASWAC TOR and operating arrangements

Robbie Henderson (DENR) provided all members with a copy of the TTWAC terms of reference and summarized main points, including:

- Main purpose is to advise on the development of the Ti-Tree Water Allocation Plan (TTWAP)
- Members may nominate a proxy if they cannot attend a particular meeting
- Noted that it's common for WAC members to have interests in the plan area and in the plan outcomes, and that members need to declare any financial or substantial personal interests that arise in relation to matters before the committee
- Explained the role of chair and of DENR in providing executive support

Robbie said that the TTWAC was formed primarily to support the development of the new Ti-Tree WAP, however it would be up to the committee to decide if it wants to continue to meet or go into recess once the plan is completed. It is anticipated the WAP would be developed by mid-2017.

3. Presentation about the Ti-Tree Water Allocation Plan and planning process

Robbie Henderson gave a ppt presentation covering the general water allocation planning process, policy context and process and timeline for preparing the Ti-Tree Water Allocation Plan. Copy of presentation attached; see Annex 1.

Members noted that DENR had ceased monitoring bores in the Ti-Tree water control district and that monitoring needs to be reinstated. Historic data may be available through other sources and Adam Davis (PWC) offered PWC data on water levels from monitoring bores associated with public water supplies in the Ti-Tree district.¹

Members discussed the importance of providing input into the water allocation plan objectives, as these frame the plan. Robbie introduced the draft objectives and highlighted the links with the NT water allocation planning framework. It was agreed that TTWAC members would receive and provide feedback on the draft TTWAP objectives prior to the

¹ It was confirmed post meeting that DENR had already received the Power & Water data and it had been integrated into the database available for hydrological assessment and modelling

next WAC meeting. If possible WAC members would find consensus and recommend a set of WAC objectives to DENR. The draft objectives are copied below:

- (i) Avoid detrimental impacts to water dependent ecosystems as a consequence of consumptive water use
- (ii) Avoid negative impacts to cultural values of places reliant upon surface or groundwater as a consequence of consumptive water use
- (iii) Enable equitable access to available water of sufficient quality for consumptive beneficial uses
- (iv) Ensure water of sufficient quality is available for consumptive beneficial use by future generations
- (v) Enhance opportunities for indigenous people to benefit from consumptive use of water and management of water to protect environmental & cultural values

ACTION:

- (a) *Distribute draft WAP objectives (& supporting information) and seek feedback from WAC members – (Robbie - through the Chair)*

4. Roundtable to identify matters of interest / opportunities for information exchange from participants (for the forward agenda)

The Chair provided each member with an opportunity to raise any matters of interest or questions for DENR to follow up, or for the forward agenda.

Robyn Grey Gardner:

- Suggested it would be useful for members to have access to previous plans, assessment reports and any other relevant information for background reading.

Rodney Baird

- Interested in knowing how to identify ownership, responsibility and accessibility to bores (e.g. for roads maintenance work)
- Robbie explained the value of using NR Maps

Adam Davis:

- Power and Water would seek to engage on the 'use it or lose it' (underutilised water) policies. Have concerns about how to incentivise efficient water use. Robbie Henderson agreed that this item could be included in future discussions for the Ti-Tree WAC. Vin Lange said that from his understanding, it was currently difficult to enforce 'use it or lose it.' Robbie said that developing new policies (and potentially changes to the Water Act) around use it or lose it was on the Departments agenda, and the objective is to have policy that can be effectively implemented
- Adam shared some information about Power & Water monitoring bores and observations of recharge. P&W data is available to DENR

Vin Lange

- Interested in the Strategic Indigenous Reserve (SIR) policy and its application in Ti-Tree. Robbie agreed that the Ti-Tree WAC would be engaged in future consultations on SIR policy
- Raised concerns about the current policy of ten year license terms, suggesting that this presents a barrier to investment
- Raised a concern that DENR may have had a practice of approving licences prior to them being advertised. Robbie provided feedback on the licencing process required under the Act and said that he was personally unaware of instances where the process wasn't followed

Bill Low

- Interested in ensuring various studies that have occurred in Ti-Tree are considered in planning
- Mentioned TERG project (Terrestrial Ecohydrology Research Group field sites on Aileron) and TERN projects (Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Network looking at sites between Darwin & Adelaide)

ACTIONS:

- (b) Distribute previous plans and other relevant Ti-Tree reports to TTWAC members (Robbie, Bill)*
- (c) Provide information to Rodney regarding how to access NR Maps (Robbie)*
- (d) Check with DENR Assessment branch to ensure P&W data is being used (Robbie)*

5. Next meeting & forward agenda

Members requested that an important next step would be to provide the WAC with an update on the Ti-Tree Water Assessment and Modelling. This was recognised as important as it will establish a platform of knowledge about the water resource that will inform members and increase their ability to provide informed advice.

Members agreed that the next meeting include an agenda item to agree upon Ti-Tree WAP objectives

Preferred timing for next meeting was early February 2017, specific date, day, time TBC. Meeting closed.

Summary of actions

Action	Description	Who	Due
(a)	<i>Distribute draft WAP objectives (& supporting information) and seek feedback from WAC members</i>	Robbie / Bill	7 th December 2016
(b)	<i>Distribute previous plans and other relevant Ti-Tree reports to TTWAC members</i>	Robbie, Bill	7 th December 2016
(c)	<i>Provide information to Rodney regarding how to access NR Maps</i>	Robbie	7 th December 2016
(d)	<i>Check with DENR Assessment branch to ensure P&W data is being used</i>	Robbie	7 th December 2016