

## Newsletter August 2012

### BASIN PLAN UPDATE— It's Minister Burkes call now!

The adjusted proposed Basin Plan was released this week. The amendments were made following the ministerial council meeting of the Basin States. Notice was given in May 2012 by the states, the MDBA have responded to those issues where consensus was reached. The Sustainable Diversion Limit (SDL) numbers remain largely unchanged a summary below provides a quick review of what's new in the plan. More detail is on the MDBA web.

- **SDL adjustment mechanism methodology**

A new schedule is included to allow for an adjustment to the SDL, the MDBA anticipate this will be a once off adjustment. It would be undertaken without recourse to parliament, provided the measures are assessed as warranting and adjustment. The methodology provided in schedule 5 is complex to say the least & Namoi Water has asked for clarification on a number of issues. The adjustment is limited to +/- 5% of the SDL which is around 650 gig either side of the 2750 gig number.

- **Constraints management strategy**

The strategy will assess the impacts of modifications of constraints on third parties, and how any impacts can be addressed. The MDBA notes that, of itself, the strategy will not remove constraints – this will require a conscious decision by relevant govts in consultation with affected stakeholders. The strategy will be reviewed annually.

- **Apportionment**

The MDBA will draft provisions on apportionment to be included in the Basin Plan should state Ministers agree to the apportionment before the Basin Plan is finalised. The MDBA proposes no changes to the proposed Basin Plan to address the apportionment issue until Ministers reach agreement. The process for state agreement on Northern apportionment is subject to further work being done in the north by the MDBA and reading the Ministerial council notes there is a convoluted process for determining any adjustment and split between northern valleys. Again Namoi Water is seek further clarification.

- **2015 Review Scrapped, but a review will occur**

Consistent with the adaptive management approach, the MDBA will include provisions in the proposed Basin Plan that provide for the MDBA to conduct research and investigations into aspects of the work underpinning SDLs or other aspects of the Basin Plan. Future reviews of the Basin Plan and will allow the Authority to address so-called 'new knowledge' issues that are not covered by the SDL adjustment mechanism.

- **Commencement of SDL's**

State water resource plans will be accredited for 10 years under the Basin Plan. There will be reasonable excuse provisions re: compliance with SDLs if the Commonwealth has not 'bridged the gap'.

### Namoi Water Study FINAL REPORT

After two years of working through the Stakeholder Advisory Group for Namoi Water Study the final report was publicly released last month. It was interesting to see Santos make media release at 12.05pm & Minister Chris Hartcher at 4.05pm after the public meetings stating that the study shows no impact on Ground water resources.

The study has a number of deficiencies, however there are some major deviations away from the Terms of Reference resulting in a less than robust final outcome.

Key points on the limits placed on the study by the Department of Industry and Investment & data

- The run time was limited to 24 hours which limits the study resolution & cell size
- The resolution provides for 1 x 1 klm grids which lumps together the geological layers reducing the resolution
- The resolution impacts on the models capacity to show water level drawdown & impact on SW.
- Lack of data in the CSG model, in particular connectivity data.
- Climate scenario is based on 20 year period replicated over the 100 year model outputs

Santos and the Minerals Minister Chris Hartcher have conveniently overlooked the fact that this valley has already been through a long and arduous process to achieve sustainability. Any drawdown of GW resources outside the WSP process is viewed as significant. Both the alluvial and surface water systems are monitored by a hydrometric network paid for by licence holders. Extraction impacts can be stopped by turning the bore off, mining impacts cannot be remediated in the same way nor are they be monitored or measured in the deeper systems.

#### What does the Namoi Water Study show?

Upper Namoi Groundwater levels in four locations are at **HIGH risk**. Five are at **MODERATE risk** and the remaining three alluvial groundwater sources have low risk but also low confidence levels in the data contained within the study using scenario 3 development levels (current and proposed mines and csg fields).

The study results represents an amber and red light for the proposed development planned. There is a lack of information on connectivity between the deeper groundwater systems and the groundwater systems above. Water quality is an area that requires further data and monitoring.

The surface water reductions result in 2% reduction in volume as measured at Narrabri gauge as a result of mines intercepting SW flows. This will be unlicensed. The water study will now be used by the CMA in their cumulative risk assessment tool—if Minister Hartchers Minerals department grant them a licence..

## HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROPOSED

At a recent meeting in Gunnedah 100 people turned out to progress the Namoi undertaking a Health Impact Assessment as a baseline of data regarding health impacts from mining and CSG. These calls are warranted as information provided by the Office of Environment and Heritage shows that background dust levels are **already high** and can exceed minimum air quality standards at certain times. Open cut coal mines are going to add to that dust load and there is very little margin for additional dust emissions before these standards are breached. The impact of dust is not isolated to the mine area, as shown in the Hunter the whole catchment will be affected if proposed open cut mining proceeds here in the Namoi and coal dust emissions increase.

One of the goals of HIA's are to ensure that projects such as open cut mining do not negatively impact on our community. Like air quality, it is important to establish a baseline of existing health metrics in our community. Calls for a HIA have gone unanswered by Planning Assessment Commission and the State Government. Yet again it is our community that is leading the way in the development of scientific assessment to provide information to regulators. More info. [www.mccc.org](http://www.mccc.org)

### NAMOI WATER MEETINGS

**27th August - Regulated & Unregulated Water users meeting 11am and 12.30pm**

**Priag Marketing Board  
Room 69 Maitland Street  
Narrabri**

**28th August - Zone Groundwater meetings Upper Namoi**

**9-10 am Gunnedah Services Club**

**11-12am Quirindi Services Club**

**2-3 pm Mullaley Royal Hotel**

**4-5 pm Baan Baa Royal Hotel**

**29th August Groundwater Meeting Lower Namoi Wee Waa Bowling Club**

### NAMOI WATER AGM DATE 12TH SEPTEMBER NARRABRI RSL CLUB

#### Namoi Water Board

Chairman Jono Phelps  
0427 657457

Treasurer Peter Watson  
0427 434 643

Director Michael Carberry  
0427 665662

Director Ian Coxhead  
0409 609254

Director Tim Duddy  
0427 106267

Director Matt Norrie  
0427 913016

Director Mark Hamblin  
0429 302749

Director Paul Hawkins  
0428 639451

## METERING PROJECT—HOW WILL IT EFFECT YOUR LICENCE!

NSW Office of Water has received funding from the Federal Government for a project to rollout state wide metering. Despite **repeated requests** for consultation at the Customer Service Committee level it took a freedom of information request before the business case underpinning the project was released. NSWIC voted to **reject the business case** and again sought government consultation regarding a suitable project.

The metering project is premised on the basis that all meters need to be upgraded to the new standards by 2016 and that current meters are under reading by 3-8%. In return for \$19 million for the Namoi meter upgrade **9 gigs of surface water (HS/GS)** & groundwater will be handed to the commonwealth as licenced entitlement - REGARDLESS of whether the savings exist. Thus the water is being removed without compensation in exchange for an upgraded meter.

This results in the commonwealth paying \$893/meg in return for the surface water licences both High Security & General Security. The regulated water users are subsidising the meter rollout across all other water sources and the commonwealth gets a bargain in the process. State Water will own a consistent meter fleet including telemetry and NOW get an administration fee to continue their staffing levels.

Following significant concerns raised with our local member Kevin Humphries, a meeting was organised with Minister Hodgkinson. The northern valleys received written confirmation from the Minister that **NOW would consult** with Northern valleys— 8 months later an this has not yet occurred and ultimately the Ministers letter confirmed if the northern valleys do not wish to proceed with the project then the funds will be redirected to other projects.

NOW have recently sent a 7 page flyer to irrigators in the Border Rivers with their sales pitch for the project. What it fails to report is the true costs of the project contained within the business case, the premise that Magflow meters are to be installed at significant cost for ongoing maintenance and the volume of water returned in the \$/meg value is across all water sources not where the real impact is in the regulated surface water system.

NAMOI WATER position has been for the past 3 years at the CSC and NSWIC is that whilst we support accurate metering we seek engagement to develop an agreeable project to utilise the funding available. It is our view that there are limited savings to be achieved, the impact will be realised in loss of reliability and the project must include a range of meter types to meet northern requirements.

Please be aware the NOW flyer does not contain all the information you need to assess this project and determine impact on your licence. Like all things if it sounds too good to be true it probably is. If you receive a flyer from NOW and wish to discuss the detail and impact on your licence please contact the office. Ph: 0267925222 Mb: 0488925222

**ABOUT US** : Namoi Water is the peak industry group for irrigated agriculture in the Peel, Upper Namoi and Lower Namoi Valleys in the North West of NSW. We are a non-profit, non-political organisation supporting our members to achieve a sustainable irrigation industry that meets the environmental, economic and social needs of our local communities.

Phone: 02 67925 222  
Fax: 02 67925225  
Mob: 0488 925222  
E-mail: [eo@namoiwater.com.au](mailto:eo@namoiwater.com.au)



PO BOX 548  
69 MAITLAND ST  
NARRABRI  
NSW 2390