

Community Reference Group Communique



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The third Community Reference Group (CRG) meeting for the Darwin Region Water Infrastructure Program (the Program) was held at De Lago Resort at Lake Bennett on 27 June 2023.

The purpose of the CRG is to provide the community with information on the Program and report back any matters raised by the community to the Northern Territory (NT) Government. The CRG opens a direct line for community voices to be heard and aims to take the community on the journey with the NT Government as the Program progresses.

AROWS SITE TOUR

The CRG, accompanied by the NT Government's project team and Power and Water, were provided a tour of the Adelaide River Off-stream Water Storage (AROWS) project site, which was led by Power and Water's Senior Headworks Planning Engineer, Trevor Durling.

The group boarded a 4WD bus and journeyed to the location where the water intake system is proposed to be built. Trevor discussed the opportunities and challenges in this area, including the suitability of the different water transfer infrastructure options from the river to the basin.

The next stop of the tour was Central Gap – one of the largest embankments planned for the AROWS basin. Trevor explained that, based on the current design parameters, there will be a concrete-faced rock fill dam built at Central Gap, the same type as at the other embankment sites – North Gap and Saddle No.1. These will range from 30-40 m high and 200-300 m wide.

The group travelled through the basin (the future inundation area) on their way to the top of the North Gap ridge. From this higher vantage point, they were able to view the entire AROWS ridge line and basin.

The tour provided a great opportunity for the CRG to gain a deeper understanding of the AROWS site and learn more about the technical aspects of the project from Trevor.



Figure 1. View from the top of the North Gap ridge



Figure 2. The proposed site for the water intake system.

PROGRAM BRIEFING

CRG members were provided with briefings on the following topics:

- Environmental Impact Statement for AROWS– delivered by Natalie Fries and Chloe Sullivan, GHD
- AROWS update – delivered by Evan Tyrrell, Department of Industry Tourism and Trade (now Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics)
- Manton Dam Return to Service update – delivered by Trevor Durling, Power and Water Corporation.

Environmental Impact Statement

GHD Environmental Consultants, Natalie Fries and Chloe Sullivan, presented on the work GHD will be undertaking as part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the AROWS project over the next few years. The presentation also outlined the EIS process in the NT.

EIS process and update

Project Manager, Natalie Fries, explained that an EIS is a report that is comprised of a series of environmental impact assessments, including cultural and social environments. The Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) conducts an environmental impact assessment, on behalf of the NT Government, for all proposed actions that have potential for significant impact.

The Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water Security makes the final decision on approval or otherwise, following the assessment.

Natalie explained that there are a number of environmental themes the NT EPA will consider in the EIS process including land, water, sea, air and people. The CRG will be heavily involved in engagement and planning, particularly in relation to the 'people' impacts.

Building on the preliminary environmental studies completed to date by Power and Water, GHD and the NT Government will be undertaking the highest level of environmental assessment for the AROWS project – a tier three EIS. Natalie explained that a tier three assessment is the most intensive level of assessment with four opportunities for the public to be involved and consulted with.

Natalie clarified that the first step in the EIS process is the pre-referral planning which involves establishing context, and identifying and understanding risks associated with the project.

GHD is currently undertaking a gap analysis to determine where they can add value to studies that are required, as well as creating a project description to detail the actions for the EIS. This is a collaborative process and GHD will be holding workshops with the NT Government to consult stakeholders to understand and ensure information is captured.

Social Impact Assessment

Social Scientist, Chloe Sullivan, led the second half of the presentation about the Social Impact Assessment (SIA), which is an important component of the EIS. The SIA will cover all impacts on individuals, families, communities and societies – positive and negative – as a result of the project.

Scoping is informed by engagement to find out what the community thinks and what matters to people. Therefore, the community will need to understand the project before SIA engagement can occur.

The SIA will require GHD and the CRG to work collaboratively. This assessment will include:

- A rigorous stakeholder identification process.
- Understanding the uses of areas and consulting with the community.
- Identifying and understanding the social impacts.
- Establishing a Social Impact Management Plan to minimise impacts that have been previously identified.

Chloe highlighted that GHD wants to work with the CRG to ensure the right stakeholders and communities are consulted with. She emphasised that communities need to understand the project before SIA engagement can occur. GHD want to engage early and continuously with stakeholders. She noted that GHD is currently in the planning phase but is seeking the CRG's input now to ensure effective engagement with communities.

Adelaide River Off-stream Water Storage (AROWS) update

Evan Tyrrell, Senior Director of Facilitated Projects and Infrastructure, provided an update on the AROWS project and recent community engagement initiatives, including the Lake Bennett BBQ, Freds Pass Rural Show and the Food Futures Conference.

Evan discussed the meaningful engagement at the recent community BBQ event held by the Lake Bennett Association and Member for Daly at Lake Bennett on 6 May 2023. The BBQ provided the local community with an opportunity to talk to government representatives and CRG members about the Program and specifically, AROWS.

He mentioned that about 50 people attended the event, with most attendees residing in the Lake Bennett and surrounding areas. The event provided a useful insight into community interests with key themes identified and captured that are important to the community.

Evan also discussed the team's positive community engagement experience at the Freds Pass Rural Show on 27-28 May 2023. Sharing a stall with the NT Government's Biosecurity team, the Program team showcased a 3D model of AROWS and accompanying augmented reality technology that provided a useful visual tool to explain the project.

Evan highlighted that the community sentiment was positive. He noted that rural residents – the main attendees at the event – are not typically connected to Darwin's water network but understood the importance of planning for future infrastructure investment to maintain water security across the network.

Lastly, Evan announced that responsibility for the AROWS project is transitioning to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (DIPL) as of 1 July 2023 and will be under Infrastructure NT.

Manton Dam Return to Service (RTS) project update

Trevor Durling, Senior Headworks Planning Engineer, updated the CRG on the Manton Dam RTS project that Power and Water is leading.

Trevor noted the design and construction tender is closing at the end of July 2023, with the detailed assessment period commencing shortly after. The tender is expected to be awarded by the end of the year with the consultant to commence in Q1 2024. He also mentioned that the Manton Dam RTS environmental referral is expected to be submitted to the NT EPA in August 2023.

Trevor explained that Power and Water is currently working with GHD to develop a Recreation Management Plan. The other focus as part of the referral is consulting with downstream stakeholders of Manton River to understand their use of the river and its water.

CRG MEMBERS

Members present at the CRG meeting included:

- Darryl Day, Chair
- David Ciaravolo, Chief Executive Officer Amateur Fishermen's Association NT
- Greg Ireland, Chief Executive Officer Chamber of Commerce NT
- Dheran Young, Member for Daly
- Natasha Chapman, Acting Chief Executive Officer Coomalie Community Government Council (proxy for Sharon Hillen)

Members who were apologies and unable to attend the meeting were:

- Gary Higgins, former NT minister and local resident
- Graham Kenyon, Custodian of Limilngan-Wulna land and owner of Pudukul Aboriginal Cultural Tours
- Karen May, Chief Executive Officer Territory Natural Resource Management
- Kezia Purick MLA, Member for Goyder
- Paul Burke, Chief Executive NT Farmers
- Ruth Palmer, Public Officer Lake Bennett Community Association Inc
- Stephen Hoyne, Chief Executive Officer Litchfield Council
- Sharon Hillen, Chief Executive Officer Coomalie Community Government Council

MEETING SCHEDULE

The next CRG meeting is scheduled for November 2023. It is proposed that this meeting will held in Batchelor.

MORE INFORMATION

If you would like to receive more information regarding the Program and upcoming events in your community, sign up to the community e-newsletter [here](#).

CONTACT DETAILS

Community members are encouraged to contact their CRG representative to voice matters related to the Program. Alternatively, community members can contact the NT Government Program Team directly by email on WaterInfrastructure.DIPL@nt.gov.au.



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Infrastructure Program.**