

GREAT ARTESIAN BASIN COORDINATING COMMITTEE

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CHAIR'S COMMUNIQUE No.3

The Great Artesian Basin Coordinating Committee (the Committee) continues to provide advice to governments with responsibilities for the Great Artesian Basin (the Basin). This advice emphasises efficient, effective and sustainable whole-of-basin management and coordination of activity between stakeholders to that end.

The Committee does not have a resource management or lobbying role. Operational matters for basin management are primarily the responsibility of State/Territory agencies.

The Committee comprises members who represent the Australian, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Northern Territory governments, as well as representatives of communities, industries and other sectors with interests in the Basin.

See the website gabcc.gov.au for a list of current members and for the Committee's Operating Arrangements.

Please note that we now have a single point of telephone contact for Committee matters - **1800 900 090**.

Summary of Meeting Outcomes – GABCC 35, Brisbane 17-18 March 2016

This Communiqué is intended to encourage communications with all Basin stakeholders and communities. We encourage you to seek further information on any of the items raised, by contacting either the Secretariat or members of the Committee.

GAB Strategic Management Plan

The main item for this meeting was revision of the Great Artesian Basin Strategic Management Plan (SMP). The Committee discussed the tone and scope of the draft SMP, the timeline for its delivery, and the process for consultation of Basin users.

The SMP is to be a principles-based document to provide guidance on best practice to anyone with an interest in the Basin, including communities, scientists/researchers, industry, users, regulators and governments. This will encompass broader natural resource management issues related to delivery of Basin water, and seek balanced (triple-bottom-line) outcomes to express the 'health' of the resource.

The SMP provisions need to foster 'secure and managed access' to Basin water, in which:

- All users know their roles and responsibilities, which are clearly defined
- All use is accounted for
- Waste is eliminated
- Rights are flexible and negotiable
- Infrastructure is maintained, with clear responsibility for costs.

A draft is expected to be available for public comment in July 2016.

Community input and support will be vital if the SMP is to deal adequately with contemporary issues and public/private partnerships over the next 10-15 years. The Committee emphasised the need for consultation processes to be sufficiently inclusive to address community, social and economic issues.

These processes also need to combine with other stakeholder events and make use of collectives of local government bodies and NRM organisations, with appropriate attendance by jurisdictions.

They also need to offer ample opportunities for participation by stakeholders who are unable to attend face-to-face events.

Great Artesian Basin Economic Output Report

The Committee received an update on the Great Artesian Basin Economic Output Report, which is being developed in parallel with the new SMP. This report will document current and future water use and users in the Basin, and the value of industries or sectors which depend on Basin water. A draft of this report is expected in early May 2016, and its findings will be reflected in the SMP revision.

Great Artesian Basin Sustainability Initiative (GABSI)

The SMP is a vital tool to shape options and influence decision-making beyond the GABSI4 program, by highlighting the true value of the GAB to the national economy, the value of water distribution infrastructure, and the consequences of not building on the achievements of GABSI to date.

The Committee emphasised the need for a long-term, economically viable, and reliable way to maintain infrastructure into the future, as a public-private partnership. In conjunction with the SMP and the Great Artesian Basin Economic Output Report, the Committee will be considering a range of future funding options.

Great Artesian Basin Bore Data and audit

The Committee received and discussed two presentations which examined the extent and condition of Basin bores. These studies contribute to our understanding of the value of infrastructure in water delivery systems. The Great Artesian Basin bore data report requires some additional data before being finalised, and this will contribute to both the revised SMP and the Economic Output Report.

A recent audit in South Australia, undertaken to inform compliance policy development, has also played a key educational role for users, with other jurisdictions encouraged to follow a similar path.

Developing knowledge of the GAB resource

An additional presentation outlined the Geoscience Australia Hydrogeological Atlas of the GAB, which will increase understanding about the Great Artesian Basin resource.

Technical input into the SMP will be strengthened by formal inclusion of the Office of Water Science (OWS) in the revision process.

The Great Artesian Basin Resource Study update (draft 2015) will be published on the Committee website in the near future.

The Great Artesian Basin Research Bibliography is still to be updated, and will be used to keep abreast of research reports which are useful for Basin management.

Governance and future arrangements

The Committee had a conversation about future governance models, including increased coordination with arrangements for the Lake Eyre Basin (LEB). We will continue to explore options, in parallel with development of the new Strategic Management Plan.

Annual Report 2014/15

The Annual Report for 2014-15 will be published on the Committee's website after some final edits.

Next Meeting

The Committee plans to meet prior to public release of the draft Strategic Management Plan, at end May-early June in Canberra.

JUANITA HAMPARSUM
CHAIR