



Yarra Yarra Catchment Management Group

General Meeting

February 19th, 2009
2.30 pm
YYCMG Office Kalannie

1. Open General Meeting (2.30pm)

The chairperson M. Peter Syme declared the General Meeting of the YYCMG open at 2.30pm

1.1. Attendance

Barrye Thompson, Peter Syme, Janette MacPherson, Lizzie King, Keith Camac, Jo Ashworth, Stacey Hudson, Max Hudson, Dene Solomon, Robert Nixon, Ian Fordyce, Mark Reynolds, Richard Lee, Keith Carter

1.2. Apologies

No apologies

2. Minutes of previous General Meeting, held 23rd October 2008

2.1. Amendments

Moved Lizzie King 2nd Dene Solomon that the minutes of the YYCMG meeting held 23rd October be adopted as a true and correct record.

Carried 12/0

2.2. Matters Arising

Matters arising will be covered in this meeting

2.3. Sign previous minutes if true and correct record (Chairperson)

3. Executive Reports

3.1. Correspondence (Stacey Hudson)

3.1.1. Correspondence In - tabled

- Letters to North Midlands Accounting Services re doing the audits of projects 053065-01YYCMG and 051NRMO-13
- Bankwest correspondence re cancellation of YYCMG credit card (x 2)
- Lotterywest grant variation approval

3.1.2. Correspondence Out – tabled

- Letters from North Midlands Accounting Services re doing the audits of projects 053065-01YYCMG and 051NRMO-13
- Bankwest correspondence re cancellation of YYCMG credit card
- Lotterywest, re grant variation request

3.2. Funding and Finance (Stacey Hudson)

3.2.1. Financial Report (see report, YYCRC and YYCMG)

YYCMG:

- Expenses paid by YYCMG on behalf of YYCRC in July & August 2008 have now been reimbursed.
- No funds left in the management group for capital and drainage salaries, all transferred to Regional Council.
- Invoices for drain maintenance fees sent in November 08 and reminders sent at the end of January 09, about \$5000 outstanding (detailed on Stacey's report).
- Have bought a truck with funds from the enterprise account, still licensing and transfer fees etc... to come out of this account for the truck.

- Agri-Services Perenjori still owe \$1925 for the arrangement they made with the mine for the hire of the YYCMG motor bike.
- Two of the vehicles are still in YYCMG's name, we will leave these to run the course of their lease agreements, this will be easier than transferring them.

YYCRC:

- Still waiting for the audited financials from Shire of Perenjori.
- There is very little money to do anything past June 30th 2009.
- With regard to uncompleted projects, unspent money has to be returned, this may be to NACC or the State.
- NACC have not paid outstanding invoices (dated January 2009), except for NRMO's.

Moved Keith Camac 2nd Max Hudson that the financial statement for the YYCMG be received.

Carried 12/0

3.2.2. Insurance

Stacey is in the process of renewing all insurances as they expire 28th February.

Transferred contents insurance to Regional Council for the Perenjori and Kalannie offices, this includes the field equipment.

Regional Council has a workers compensation policy in place. This is due for renewal in April. YYCMG will no longer need workers comp insurance.

The YYCMG will still need a volunteers workers compensation policy – agreed that this be continued.

The broker has advised YYCMG still requires Associations Liability Insurance.

If we are still an active group we can still be sued, so therefore we need to have cover for liability etc... and this cannot be transferred to the Regional Council.

YYCMG have been strongly advised that we should continue this policy for the next 6 years. This costs \$2500 a year (for \$5million cover). We are looking to drop it to \$2million cover and waiting to hear what this may cost per year.

The Regional Council has also taken out Associations Liability Insurance.

Discussed the following:

- If YYCMG has no income, why should we continue to pay for this policy?
- Can we get free advice from somewhere, or should we seek legal advice from Eddie Biggs.
- If we are an incorporated organisation then no individual will be liable, so does it matter.

Moved by Jan 2nd Keith that Max seeks clarification and legal advice on this insurance policy up to \$200 cost for legal fees.

Carried 12/0

3.2.3 Assets

- Axel for the oil mallee trailer.
- New tyres and rims for the oil mallee truck.
- Toughbook, through the Dept of Water monitoring project.
- New projector, purchased through the NRMO project.

3.3 Item for approval – Stacey's Wages

Changing to the Regional Council has been a full time job for Stacey, during the period 1/7/08 to 31/10/08 she has worked 80 hours over and above paid time. Wages have always come from the drainage project. As the NRMO and sub-surface projects finished on 30/06/08 and had unspent funds, it was decided by the employment committee to pay

Stacey \$1,000 out of the NRMO project and \$500 out of the sub-surface project. A further \$1000 will be paid to Stacey out of the oil mallee project.

Show of hands to ratify this

Carried 12/0

4. Reports

4.1. YYCRC report (Barrye Thompson) – tabled (see attached)

Still working on the lease agreements. The final agreement may not be exactly the same as the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) but some components will be. We will have to make allowance for people putting their own drains into the main drain.

The Water Services Licensing Act (WSL Act) has all the elements of what we need. If we can put a good enough case, the Regional Council may be able to get a license, which will cover an area (i.e. The YYCRC area).

The YYCRC cannot set a rate under the local government act, but YYCRC may be able to set a rate under a different act (ie the Land Drainage Act)

On the 3rd February 2009, attended a meeting with the Minister for Agriculture.

The Minister did not seem very interested in deep drainage but did comment that he is convinced deep drainage works in relation to salinity control..

The CEO considered it prudent that the YYCRC arrange a meeting with the Minister for Water as the ability for rating under both the Water Services Act 1995 and the provisions of the Land Drainage Act 1925, by the YYCRC, are under his portfolio as Minister.

The CEO commented on the meeting with Mr. Ken McIntosh held at Perenjori in December at which the point was raised that attracting future funds for both deep drainage extension and continued monitoring and data collection of the existing looked very bleak. An aside by Mr. McIntosh that they (DoW) may be able to help with monitoring funds was noted.

An issue raised by Max: A requirement of the WSL Act is that proof must be provided that you can provide the service you say you will. At the moment the YYCRC is not in a position to guarantee that. We will need to know what the cost of the service is going to be and also define the service we will provide.

We need to convince them that the Regional Council is sustainable and that there is sufficient money coming in to fund the CEO and finance manager positions (1.5 fte) – until we are in a situation where we can set rates. We need to work out how to get this necessary money.

The rates may be two tier: One rate if there is a drain on your property and a different rate for everybody else

Even if we are not undertaking capital works we need to be in a situation to do so if money does become available. The same goes for continued monitoring.

Royalties for regions – there may be money to fund this area

The Mid-West Development Council and the Wheatbelt Development Council, received \$4million in funds for infrastructure, some of which is specifically for NRM

NACC have received \$3.9mill from the Federal Government for operations and some projects but this is limited to the criteria set by the Australian Government which doesn't encompass the control of salinity.

4.2. NRMO report (Dene Solomon and Lizzie King) – tabled (see attached)

-There will be a meeting between Barrye Thompson, Bill Currans and Katherine Atkinson regarding the NRMO job descriptions and variations to their contracts.

-Have been working with John Borger (Dept of Ag) and Fiona Falconer (Land for Wildlife) to put together a project looking at controlling ice plant.

**Moved Max Hudson 2nd Richard Lee that the YYCMG will support the proposed Ice Plant Project put forward through Caring For Our Country (CFOC) if successfully funded.
Carried**

4.3. Survey Report (Dene Solomon)

Have started surveying and mapping for the lease areas. Some of the strainer posts still need putting in before they can be surveyed.

4.4. Oil mallee report (Jo Ashworth)

Asset pre-approval forms have been submitted to the JSC for capital items

The project has been formally extended to 30th June

Kalannie Distillers is not operating at the moment as it is not financially viable. We will have to wait and see what happens regarding the approval forms and go from there. Bill Currans is sorting this out, and advises tread softly.

Jo is now also working as an Oil Mallee Association (OMA) rep and will be helping out with the NACC oil mallee project but not entirely sure how. This project has a different focus to the other project, with the emphasis on their benefits for wind erosion and groundwater recharge, and less so on harvesting the oil, although the seedlings have been selected for high oil content. Plus, they have the potential for carbon trading.

CO2 Australia, Men of Trees and the FPC (in partnership with Synergy) are all looking at the potential of oil mallees for carbon trading

There is an oil mallee field day on Friday 27th March, at Kalannie.

4.5. Max Hudson report

The LCDC idea is still progressing which is important in case the YYCMG completely folds up

- LCDC would provide a way of still collecting service fees
- LCDC will exclude Morawa (for the time being)
- We will call another public meeting at the next meeting at Perenjori

Currently there are only 100km of drainage, we cannot expect the Regional Council to exist to manage this amount.

- Fencing: A lot of this has been delayed due to harvest. This is one of the reasons for the new truck, i.e. to dig the holes. Have tried to keep some of the extension money in case of going over budget. It is difficult when fencing materials have gone up from \$1500, to \$2500/km. If the money does run out we may not be able to fence all of the drainage areas. There is still money for wages for Heppy and Sparky

- The State Government is still deciding what they are doing with NRM funding. This means we don't know if there will be funding to keep the YYCMG office open, Kalannie in particular.

- The Wheatbelt Catchment Alliance (WCA) – have put in for an infrastructure project through Royalties for Regions. If they get this money, YYCMG will be fine; however there may be no funding available until December 2009

- We are trying to get a meeting with a representative from the Treasury. It is difficult to put your case successfully when they do not know the ins and outs of the project.

We do have support from some (Brendan Grylls). David Hartley suggested lobby the ministers or local member (Grant Woodhams, no luck talking to him yet).

Hopefully within the next week or so we will know what's going to happen.

- At the moment it is very uncertain whether there will be funding for Max, Jo and Ian after the 30th June. The Regional Council is applying to NACC for interim funding, for 12 months, for 2.5 fte (subject to approval at this meeting)

Max 2 days a week, Ian full time, Jo 1 day a week, Casual staff part time

- We urgently need to address that the lease will cover everything that is in the original MOU, would like to have a workshop with Max, Barrye and Peter.

Max, Barrye and Peter will organise this.

4.6. Monitoring Report – Aquatic Invertebrate Survey (Ian Fordyce) and explanatory notes (titled: The 2008 aquatic invertebrate survey – why read the report, and why was the survey done anyway?) – both tabled (see attached)

(Lizzie to put this report on the web site)

Overview of the report.

24 sites were surveyed, split into four groups – some exposed to drains, some not exposed (controls), some acidic, some near-neutral or slightly alkaline. There was no consistent difference in the structure of aquatic invertebrate communities between controls and exposed sites, although there were some differences between acidic and neutral sites. A clarification: nearly half of the lakes and wetlands examined were acidic, including many that had never been exposed to drains. Some of these 'naturally' acidic waters may have been acidic even before clearing; others have clearly become acidic only recently – probably through rising groundwater tables.

The Yarra Yarra invertebrate fauna is broadly similar to other invertebrate faunas in the wheatbelt. Just as in other parts of the wheatbelt, salinity is by far the most dominant environmental determinant. Salinity has an over-riding effect.

There is a suggestion that sites exposed to acidic drainwater have higher concentrations of metal pollutants and less diverse faunas than naturally acidic sites with similar levels of salinity.

However, there are not enough sites in the survey to be able to conclude this with confidence.

This report may appease those with moderate anti-drainage opinions, but fanatics might still be able to find something in it that supports their opinions.

Report Conclusion: To the best of our knowledge, there is no glaring threat to aquatic invertebrate communities from the drains, but also no definitive answer. If drains were doing something really bad, it would have been picked up in this survey – the fact that it didn't is good for the project and overall this report does not have a negative outlook for drainage.

Keith remarked that the view of the Wheatbelt Drainage Council is that if there is no good reason not to do it, then it ought to be done

Note that even though the report did not find anything negative, there are still other issues and problems associated with deep drainage. Ian circulated a document before the meeting, outlining some potential long-term concerns (tabled). These relate to ecosystem services and future landuses.

Moved Jan MacPherson, 2nd Keith Carter that the reports from Barrye Thompson, Lizzie King, Dene Solomon, Jo Ashworth, Max Hudson, and Ian Fordyce are received.

Carried 12/0

5. General Business

5.1. Area surrounding constructed drains – update on the lease agreement from Barrye Thompson. Next Thursday (26th Feb) for workshop meeting?

5.2. Discussion:

5.2.1. Should we try and get a Water Service License as another alternative to collecting service fees.

5.2.2. How can we guarantee the license provider that we can continue to fund a service
Still waiting for clarification on this, see above (4.1)

5.3. LCDC Progress Discussed, see above

5.4. Funding beyond June 30th 2009 – discussed, see above (4.5)

5.5. Caring for Our Country

5.5.1. Can we obtain funds through CFOC to continue the monitoring program

5.5.2. Applications update

Already discussed, see above (4.5 and 4.2)

5.6. Purchase of second hand truck for the drill rig – already discussed, see above

5.7. Progress report of fencing – discussed, see above (4.5)

5.8. Monitoring update: The Department of Water is planning to establish a weir for surface water monitoring in the Burakin Drain due to worries that water from the drains will fill the lakes. Currently waiting for a quote.

We have \$30,000 to set this up, including a silt trap some funds for monitoring,

5.9. Update of Lotterywest variation, and broom bush planting in 2009 – see above (3.1)

5.10. Review of the continued rental of the Kalannie House

Max recommends that in future it should be written into operations costs of projects.

Barrye is happy for the cost of the lease to go through the NRMO budget

Moved Keith Carter, 2nd Richard Lee that we continue paying the rent of the Kalannie house and that the Regional Council set up a lease agreement backdated to 1st July 2008, for the money to come from the NRMO budget

Carried

6. Business without Notice

6.1. WALGA

Robert Nixon drew attention to the list of local authorities/local governments, The Regional Council fall into this group, however were not on the list. Robert would like to see some action about this.

if we could get money as a special purpose group – the amount of money would be the same for 4 years

6.2. Media statement – From the \$3.9 million available to NACC, drainage is not mentioned.

Would like something to be sent to NACC from the YYCMG (as the representative of the community) to raise this issue. Peter Syme suggests sending a letter to NACC, or should we send it with the budget for staff that Max is writing.

6.3.

There will be money left for wages at June 30th, propose that the Regional Council ask NACC if this can be used for wages after June 30th

If there are unspent funds at the end of the drainage project, they will have to go back to NACC. We will have to apply for a variation to the contract to be able to use any of this money.

6.4. Matters arising from 23rd October minutes:

- Drain invoice -resolved
- Notice board for Kalannie office – will come from the NRMO fund
- IT assistance for the Perenjori office – irrelevant as no visits to Perenjori so far

7. Close Meeting (Approx 5.30 pm)

7.1. Agenda items for next meeting

7.2. Next meeting is at Perenjori, 23rd April 2009, 2.30pm

7.3. Close Meeting

There being no further business, the Chairperson closed the meeting at 5.15pm

I certify that this copy of the Minutes is a true and correct record of the meeting held on 19th February 2009.

Signed: _____
Chair of YYCMG

Date: _____

Please see website for copies of all previous minutes
www.yarayarracatchment.asn.au
