



**REPORT OF THE INTERIM COMMITTEE OF THE
GINGIN WATER GROUP
TO THE GINGIN COMMUNITY**

18 June 2011

On 27 October 2010 a public meeting held in the Granville Centre at Gingin was attended by 96 interested persons and a wide range of invited experts to discuss concerns about the pattern of water use in the district and the ultimate sustainability of the water supply in the wider Gingin area in the light of a drying climate and changing agriculture.

The outcome of this meeting was a mandate to form an interim committee to investigate the matters raised and report back to the community its findings and recommendations.

The committee was formed from volunteers and by personal approach in an effort to gather an objective, broadly based and interested group which would be willing to lend their expertise and time to achieve an outcome in a learned and non-confrontational manner.

As chairman I thank all the members for their efforts in achieving this outcome.

The committee members were:

Jill Wilson, Peter Ansell, Terry Grocke and Kevin House who all have water licenses growing mangoes, citrus, grapes and lucerne respectively. They come from diverse areas of the catchment and bring a wide range of expertise in sustainable water use.

Councillor Reg Beale is well known for his interest in this area. He sits on the committees of the EBICG and MCC and is the joint chair of the NE region of the Perth NRM group. He is the Gingin Shire's representative on the committee.

Julie Drummond is a small landholder with much needed secretarial skills who has lost her surface water source.

David Rickson represents a small grazing farm that has the perspective of a long historical connection to the upper reaches of the Gingin Brook.

Sally Calder lives at her grazing property on the Beermullah lakes. She is an environmental engineer. Sally's husband is an agricultural scientist.

Roseanna Hindmarsh represents the Ellen Brockman Integrated Catchment Group and Chittering Landcare Centre.

Ingrid Krockenburger comes from the Moore Catchment Council.



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Peter Ansell also represents the Neergabby Community Association and chairs the Citrus Improvement Group.

Jill Wilson represents the North Agricultural Catchment Council. John Braid is an experienced environmental consultant living at Gabbadah.

Sandy Pate is funded from the Commonwealth Government through the Perth Natural Resource Management Group to work in our area helping farmers understand and improve the sustainability of their operation. He has a lifetime of experience in farm management and environmental consultation. He has worked with the very latest technologies to assist modern agriculture. At the grass roots level he owns a certified citrus orchard on the Brockman River where he is having to deal personally with the drying effects of climate change. Sandy's role in our committee will be to help us understand how the community will be best served while helping farmers to better manage the natural resources at their disposal—in this case water. The Department of Water (DoW), represented by regional director Don Cummins, sits as an ex officio member.

David Rickson was elected chairman.

The chairman was unable to encourage a major vegetable grower to sit on the committee, but acknowledges that this group of stakeholders already have a strong representative group through VegiesWA and may not have wanted to complicate the relationships we were trying to forge with the various decision makers.

The committee would like to thank Mr Nick Trandos for accepting its invitation to address the Group. His input to that meeting was very cordial and constructive in putting into a context the efforts of his family in pursuing a future in vegetable growing in the Gingin catchment. The committee was left in no doubt about his sincerity and genuine concern for his farms obligation to the community in general and neighbours in particular.

Objectives and method of operation

DRAFT Gingin Water Group Charter

There are increasing concerns in the Gingin community about the reduction in the amount and quality of local groundwater and surface water, and the associated impacts on economic, environmental and social values of the greater Gingin area made worse by the decline in annual rainfall since the 1970's

The concerns are based on the:

- effects of anticipated climate change on water resources
- impact of current and future development on water resources
- influence of abstraction from the Gnamptara mound
- decline of local water-dependent ecosystems,



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- effectiveness of current and future water allocations for achieving long-term sustainability of water resources.

Our group is looking to resolve our community's concerns and to understand how we can all work together to benefit from long-term, sustainable water resources.

Interim Committee Objectives (November 2010 - July 2011):

- to develop and convey to the wider community, an understanding of:
 - the hydrogeology and surface water characteristics of the greater Gingin area, in order to gain an understanding of the complex interactions between aquifers, between groundwater and surface water, and with adjacent groundwater and surface water systems
 - the relevant statutory roles of State Government and Local Government, and the various legislative and regulatory interactions, including those being drafted
 - Department of Water methodology for water allocation, and the adequacy resources, or the consequences of limited resources available to the agency
 - historical issues relating to water resources and water usage in the greater Gingin area.
- to determine gaps in information and activities that can be fulfilled by the committee (eg historical and current monitoring being conducted by Department of Water and local water users; availability and access to monitoring data and reports)
- to conduct a familiarisation tour around the greater Gingin area
- to collate currently available relevant information
- to investigate opportunities for Community NRM funding

The committee set these initial operating objectives and went about educating itself in the hydrogeological concepts needed to scientifically understand the issues of concern.

This process was primarily achieved by building a relationship with the Department of Water regional manager, who arranged multiple meetings with the various officers that were needed. This led to an understanding of the already released, Gingin Surface Water Allocation Plan, as well as the committee becoming involved in the process of preparing the Gingin Groundwater Allocation Plan for presentation to the community.

Regional reports and scientific articles, relevant to this area, were identified by the various committee members, experienced with such searching, and circulated amongst all members.

A variety of Reports relating to water use and availability, the Gingin and Lennard Brook systems, the Moore river etc were loaned by the Gingin Shire for the Committee's use.

An education meeting was held with the Department of Environment and Conservation where the concepts underpinning the Gnamptara Mound Strategy Study were discussed with their particular relevance to the identification of the various biological assets in our area.

Various committee members attended a range of lectures, meetings and seminars relevant to the issues.

Jorg Inberger (Director UWA Centre for Water Research) presented "Water Resource Management-Connecting with Nature and Community".



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The Citrus Improvement Group presented a seminar “Changing Weather Patterns and Citrus production in south-west WA” where Dr Don McFarlane (CSIRO) Ian Foster (Dept Ag) and

Aileen Reid(Dept Ag) presented information on their particular areas of expertise specific to climate change in our region.

Staff from NACC, MCC, Perth NRM group and Chittering Landcare who are represented on the interim committee are regularly attending meetings and seminars relating to sustainable water use in our area and constantly bring this experience in the pursuit of our objectives.

The committee was involved with the DoW in the development and presentation of the recent series of community information sessions to gather and deliver information BEFORE the writing of the Draft Groundwater Allocation report.

The committee has built up a strong set of relationships within the Department of Water, Gingin Shire, Chittering Landcare Centre, Perth Region Natural Resource Management Group, Northern Agricultural Catchment Council and its associated body, the Moore Catchment Council.

All these organisations were actively represented on our interim committee. In fact the Perth NRM Group paid for their field officer, Sandy Pate, to work on our behalf. NACC paid for the Chairman to obtain significant professional training in groundwater management issues as well as supplying MCC field officer Ingrid Krockenburger to work on our behalf. Very recently the Regional Operations Manager of the Department of Agriculture has agreed to sit on the interim committee. The Chittering Landcare Centre has offered to fund our Incorporation expenses.

These contributions were significant and are acknowledged as an important factor in allowing the committee to complete its mandate to this point. More importantly, however, is that these groups, by their support and encouragement, are saying to our community, through their acceptance of the values and membership of this interim committee, that they are confident that the organisations they represent are better able to communicate their often difficult agendas to the community through this organisation rather than via individual connections.

Recommendations of the Interim Committee

It is the unanimous view of the members of this committee that the community would be best served by a permanent representative body, such as the Gingin Water Group which was fully incorporated and constituted under the control of a management committee which included a member from the Gingin Shire, Dept of Water, Dept of Agriculture, NACC, MCC, Chittering Landcare Centre and Perth Region NRM Group as well as community members to cover as widely as possible the various regions and industry stakeholders.

The issues to be addressed are many and varied and may well change over time.



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A generalised statement of objective could be used to guide the direction of the Gingin Water Group:

To address the increasing concerns in the Gingin community about the reduction in the amount and condition of local groundwater and surface water, and the associated impacts on economic, environmental and social values of the greater Gingin area.

The concerns are based on the:

- decline in annual rainfall since the 1970's
- effects of anticipated climate change on water resources
- impact of current and future development on water resources
- influence of abstraction from the Gngara mound
- decline of local water-dependent ecosystems,
- effectiveness of current and future water allocations for achieving long-term sustainability of water resources.

The Gingin Water Group is looking to resolve our community's concerns and to understand how we can all work together to achieve and benefit from long-term, sustainable water resources.

The fundamental role of a permanent representative body, [Gingin Water Group Inc, (?)] would be to act as a conduit to facilitate a flow of accurate information between the various local and Government departments involved in the water use and supply issues, with particular emphasis on information flow between the Department of Water and the Gingin community.

It is the view of the committee that the various monitoring provisions on water licenses should be a more transparent process. There are many conditions, particularly concerned with actual water usage and monitoring of the effects of the water take and possible contamination, that are attached to water licenses. The larger the license the more onerous the conditions.

It was not the intent of this committee to attempt to investigate any of the water licenses, nor does this report suggest that the terms are not being met on any particular license. However, the Department of Water makes it clear that the monitoring and audit details of particular licenses are considered confidential.

If the local community is to be satisfied in the sustainability of water use in its district then the committee would consider a more transparent monitoring process to be essential. The community should explore how this could be suitably achieved.

GWG Inc would receive and read the various Departmental reports pertinent to these issues and make submissions on behalf of the community.

Currently the Gingin Groundwater Allocation Plan Draft report is due for release and needs careful consideration.



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Drafting of the Water Resources Management Bill is presently on hold while Government considers giving approval to recommence drafting.

The community may consider that changes need to be made to address its local needs and, a degree of lobbying may be necessary at some future stage .

As climate change proceeds, these water issues, and others, are going to bite further, thus making a permanent, independent water group even more important.

Current and future issues arising from the Gingin Surface Water Allocation Plan will also need careful attention concurrent with the DoW's treatment of groundwater.

Significant ramifications, that may arise from the unsustainable allocation and extraction of water, will be evident in the environmental and social costs paid through our community.

The health of all sections of the Gingin and Lennard Brooks, and their sources and catchment streams, is fundamental to the Gingin community. Some issues may lead to correction with specific projects and funding. Other issues may be properly understood only with appropriate studies sponsored by the community. An independent permanent community group, as recommended, may be more likely to obtain such funding.

Issues relating to surface water extraction, both through licensed and riparian right, are in need of resolution. Education and consensus is the preferred approach of the interim committee. Policy change may eventually be the only sustainable option. A well structured permanent community water group, working from a local and science based perspective, would seem to be the best way of preserving a healthy asset.

To achieve success (sustainability) groundwater management requires a dedicated scientific approach calibrated to the local Gingin conditions.

The Australian Government National Water Commission sets quite definite objectives described in the National Water Initiative. However, it behoves local communities to interpret these objectives and ensure that they are relative to their own community circumstances.

The problems to Gingin are, in many cases, unique and most certainly multifactorial in cause. Many are historic in nature. OVER ALLOCATION is acknowledged in most surface water regions. Environmental water requirements are poorly identified, and the Department of Water admits that it has rarely, if ever, assessed the social water requirement in our area.

These considerations with respect to groundwater are yet to be revealed. But when revealed they must be understood and debated if necessary. This committee doubts that the micro hydrology of water discharge and recharge, as it applies property to property, and even within a property, particularly in the upper levels of the superficial and surficial aquifers, is well understood by the DoW.

This is not a criticism of the DoW. Any groundwater management authority would require generous resources to achieve this level of understanding. However, the community has much of the data necessary to build a more accurate local picture. We all have bores, soaks, wells



etc and a historical understanding of their quality (salinity), quantity and changing characteristics. If we, as a community, are not prepared to pool and organise this data to gain a sufficient understanding of the local dynamics, then how can we expect the DoW to take our individual concerns seriously. A well represented permanent group, such as the Gingin Water Group, would be an appropriate medium to obtain such an understanding and to lobby for locally sustainable water decisions.

The National Water Commission, in 2007, made the following statement under the heading :

“ Overallocation and overuse”

A lack of resourcing for management, measurement and monitoring of a number of groundwater systems in Australia has led to too many licenses being issued (overallocation) and in some cases too much groundwater being extracted(overuse)

This has been made worse by:

- *licensed groundwater usage not being metered in many parts of Australia*
- *provision of free or underpriced groundwater*
- *failure of management plans to recognise the connectivity of groundwater and surface water”*

This was a comment written in Canberra.

If it had Gingin in mind then surely it would have added another very serious local factor, scientifically verified by the CSIRO, that the Gingin region is one of the most significant areas in the south of WA to be adversely affected by a drying climate over the next 30 years.

A local community reaction to this statement would seem an irresistible justification for a permanent Gingin Water Group.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES TO ACHIEVE OVER THE NEXT YEAR OR SO.

(some may require funding)

1. Continue to liaise with the Dept of Water in order to make a learned submission to the Gingin Groundwater Allocation Plan Report. **A recent application for funds to help this process was rejected. It is the view of the committee that a well represented permanent community group, as suggested, would be more successful. NACC and MCC have suggested a mechanism to achieve funds to allow the community to make a strong and learned response to this very important upcoming Plan to control the groundwater.**
2. Ensure that the promised annual review process to the Surface and Groundwater allocation plans is carried out in an effective manner.



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3. Revisit the previous actions of the Gingin Landcare group in its work done via a major funding grant on the Gingin Brook, summarised in the Mungala Brook and Beermullah overflow local action plan and Gingin Brook local action plan both drafted in July 2002, and the large project summarised in Conservation of Gingin Brook and its Environment which went from 2006-2008. Identify any work which may be usefully done to further the Community cause and apply for suitable funding to carry out such work.
4. Develop relationships with the Department of Conservation and Environment to identify important biological assets in the region and work to evaluate their Biodiversity Value and subsequent strategies aimed at their preservation in a drying climate. This objective may require external funding.
5. Development of a regular method of information distribution to the community.
6. Develop a data base of water levels, quality and quantity at ALL extraction points over the catchment with a current and historical context, in an effort to better understand the LOCAL hydro-characteristics of the superficial and surfical aquifers .
7. Follow the progress of the State Governments alteration of the Water Resources Management Bill to ensure it caters for the local characteristics of our community.