Meeting 1 Notes

PROJECT: Future Water Source Community Consultation Group
CLIENT: Water Corporation
DATE: July 2025
VERSION: 1.2

When will you have your next Aha! moment?

Aha! CONSULTING

Contents

1 INTRODUCTION 3
2 GROUP PURPOSE AND AGREEMENTS 4
2.1 Agreements 4
2.2 Negotiables/Non-Negotiables 5
3 PROJECT CONTEXT 6
4 INTRODUCTION TO DESALINATION 9
5 SUCCESS CRITERIA 10
6 INVESTIGATION AREAS 11
7 NEXT STEPS 12
8 APPENDIX ONE - ATTENDANCE 14

1 Introduction

As part of exploring new water sources for the Lower Great Southern Towns Water Supply Scheme, the Water Corporation (the Corporation) has formed a Community Consultation Group (CCG). The expression of interest form set the purpose of this group as:

> "Consult with a diverse mix of community members to better understand the decision-making process the Water Corporation is undertaking for its future water source planning in the Great Southern Region. This will include consulting on potential sites for a seawater desalination plant in Albany."[1]

A series of meetings have been scheduled for 2025 and 2026. The first of these meetings was held on 1 July 2025 at the Albany Business Centre from 5:00pm to 7:30pm.

Prior to the meeting, a briefing pack was provided to CCG members.

The participants at the meeting can be found in Appendix One of this report.

The meeting covered five topics:

1. Introduction and group agreements
2. Project context
3. Understanding desalination
4. Exploring success criteria for site selection
5. Introducing the proposed investigation areas

What follows are the core discussion points and notes from this meeting.

[1] Water Corporation: Lower Great Southern new water source investigations. Expression of Interest - Community Consultation Group March 2025

2 Group Purpose and Agreements

The terms of reference define the group's purposes in the following way.

The **Albany Community Consultation Group (CCG)** is a place where community members and the Water Corporation can talk about future water plans for the Lower Great Southern Region.

CCG objectives

- Help obtain the views of members on the various options available to the Water Corporation
- Suggest ways to engage with the local community
- Offer advice to the Water Corporation on how issues or concerns may be addressed

Decision-making

The CCG doesn't make decisions; it is a forum for sharing information.

2.1 Agreements

Further to the code of conduct established as part of the CCG's terms of reference, the group discussed its own agreements that would contribute to robust, constructive, and productive delivery of the group's purpose.

- Respect
  - Not talking over other people
  - Making space for others to express their views (kindness)
  - Provide time for people to be able to respond
  - Make eye contact with people
- Be curious
  - Ask "what does it look like?" if you hear different views
  - Take the time to be clear about what the other is saying
- Work together
  - Working to a shared goal
  - Draw on each other's strengths
  - Be solution focus
  - Bring passion in a way others can receive
- Trust
  - Share with openness
  - Encourage two-way conversations

A question was asked about the terms of reference clause that required group confidentiality.

The Corporation's response: The clause is a standard clause to protect sensitive information, and the Corporation expects that the majority of information shared with the group is able to be shared with others in the community. The onus will be on the Corporation to let CCG members know when items ARE confidential.

2.2 Negotiables/Non-Negotiables

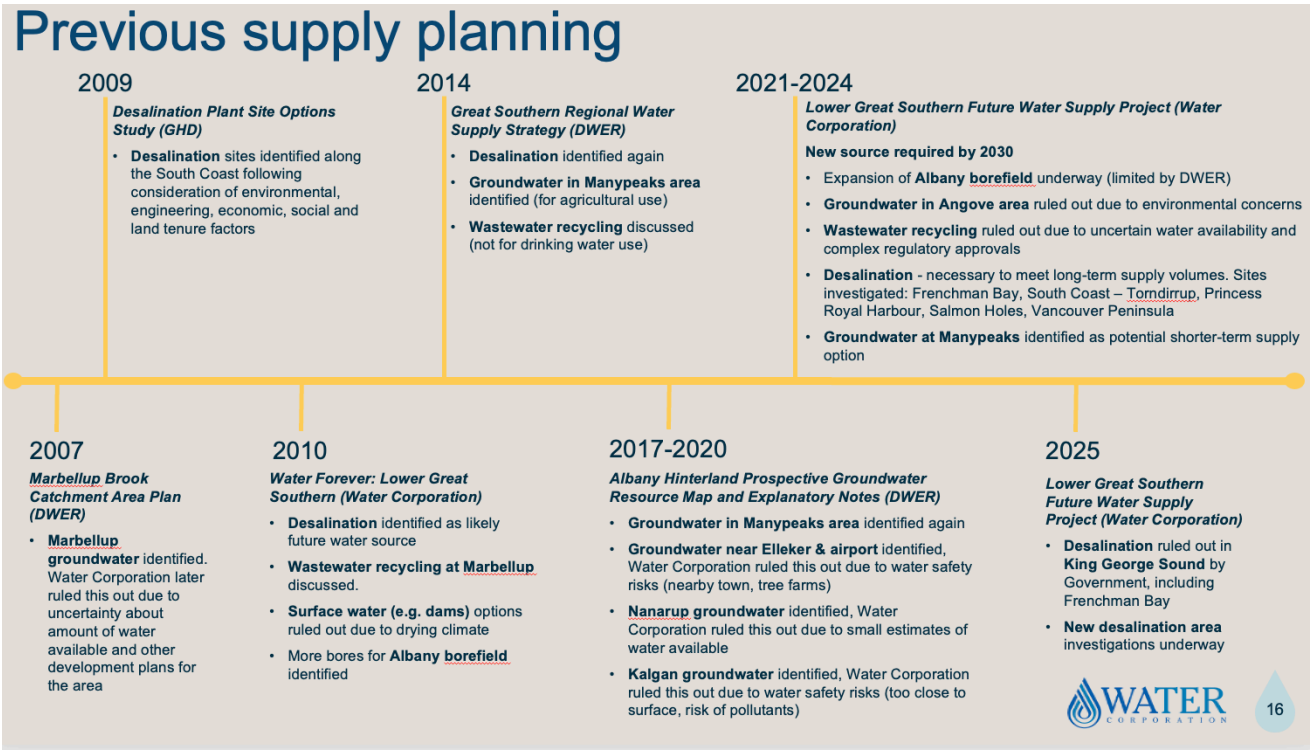
As part of the framing of the group's purpose, the following negotiables and non-negotiables were presented.

Negotiable	Non-negotiable
Changes to plans or designs to protect community use or values of an area	A new water source is required by 2030 (timing)
How future infrastructure is placed or positioned in a broader surrounding area	A Seawater Desalination Plant (SDP) is required to meet future water needs
Identification of risks and possible mitigations (e.g., visual aspects of infrastructure)	Investigation areas and final site selection for a new SDP are determined by the Water Corporation
The engagement and communications approach of the Water Corporation	Elements of SDP infrastructure must be located in areas that are technically favourable (e.g., for plant, seawater, and brine pipelines)

3 Project Context

Adrian Stewart (Regional Manager, Great Southern Region) and Matthew Bowman (Manager, Assets, South West and Great Southern) from the Water Corporation (the Corporation) provided the overall context to the project.

The CCG can refer to the slide deck on the portal for the details. The following slide outlined the project and investigation history.



Through the presentations, the following questions were asked of the Corporation; not all questions were answered at the meeting. Responses added to this document post-meeting are identified with the (P).

	CCG questions/comments	Corporation responses
1	Is this an authentic process? E.g., is there a site already selected?	There are two areas of investigation that are to be shared at this meeting, but no specific sites selected within these areas.
2	Why the seeming rush now? Why didn't it start earlier?	The timeline is being driven by the projected consumption needs. The decision to exclude the Frenchman Bay site has put the project timelines under pressure to find an alternative.
3	What are the impacts on marine life/whale migration?	The marine site equipment has a very small footprint and does not generate underwater noise during operations. Existing literature suggests there is negligible impact. For example, the marine diffuser for a large plant (EG 100GL at Alkimos) would be around 130 meters; an Albany plant is planned to have capacity of 3GL, so diffusers would likely be around 10-20 meters in length

CCG questions/comments		Corporation responses
4	What is the max outflow and output max capacity?	(P) Water Corporation will provide further information ahead of, or at, the next CCG meeting
5	What % of water across the system is currently lost due to leakage?	(P) Water Corporation will provide further information ahead of, or at, the next CCG meeting
6	Amount of water domestic and industrial?	(P) Water Corporation will provide further information ahead of, or at, the next CCG meeting
7	What is the data and impact of people with their own bores?	(P) DWER regulate private bores. We can assist by putting this query to DWER, to be addressed prior to, or at the next meeting.
8	Why progress desal without knowing the above data?	(P) Water Corporation has considered the above in progressing towards a decision to pursue seawater desalination and answers to the above questions will be provided.
9	How does Porongurup get their water – water is carted off, formerly from dam	The current dam (Bolganup) is not considered of potable quality or financially viable to make it potable, as such, water is carted from Albany. **Additional context provided post-meeting:** Porongurup was previously supplied from Bolganup Dam. The water in this dam requires additional treatment to meet drinking water standards. It is not financially viable to provide this treatment so water for Porongurup is carted from Mt Barker or Narrikup (both part of the Lower Great Southern Towns Water Supply Scheme which also supples Albany). Bolganup Dam still supplies some non standard water services with non-potable water.
10	Why are the aquifer extraction limits as they are?	The Corporation is happy to invite DWER (Department of Water and Environmental Regulation) to a meeting to speak on this. The Corporation's role is the development of a potable water supply and management of that supply across Western Australia. Regulatory decisions are set by DWER, and the environmental standards that any initiative needs to meet are set by DWER.
11	What other water efficiency measures can be developed?	Other measures are being considered in parallel to the Desalination plant **Additional context provided post meeting:** There are other programs like Waterwise initiatives for residential and non-residential customers and leak detection.
12	Any thoughts that new developments provide their own water?	Water Corporation has no authority to compel Residential developments capture their own water.
13	Why is wastewater recycling not considered for Albany?	This has been considered but was decided as not suitable due to the aquifer makeup and that it would not deliver the required yield to become the next source. **Additional context provided post meeting:** All treated wastewater from Albany Water Resource Recovery Facility is reused to irrigate tree farm.

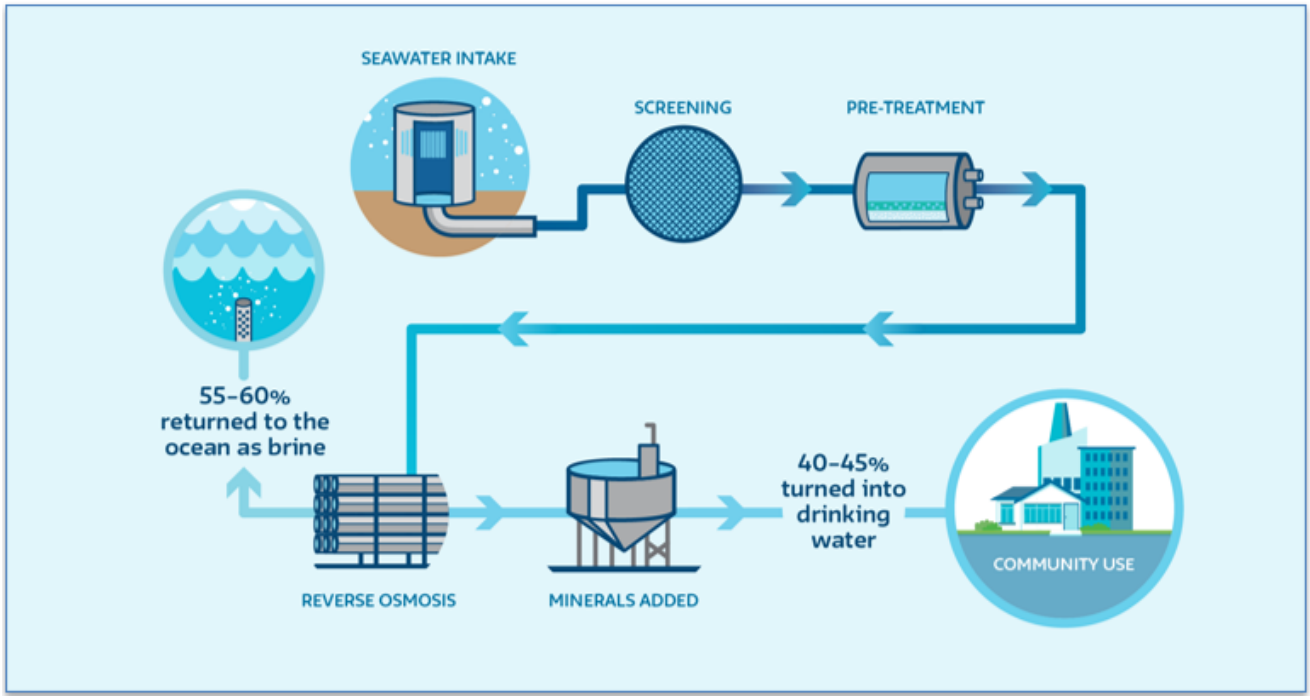
CCG questions/comments	Corporation responses
14 What are the volumes of water from wastewater treatment?	(P) Water Corporation will provide further information ahead of, or at, the next CCG meeting
15 What market research has been done on direct recharge? (i.e., recycling wastewater and supplying it directly into the system and not through managed aquifer recharge)	Water Corporation has done extensive research into this and found this option was not attractive to people and also not likely to generate the capacity of water required. Department of Health have a role in approving and regulating options to reuse wastewater. A direct potable reuse scheme would be a first in Australia and is untested. **Additional context provided post meeting:** Water Corporation can provide further information on the investigation into reusing treated wastewater via a groundwater replenishment scheme at the next meeting.
16 Who would own the plant?	It is the intention for the plant to be owned and operated by the Corporation.
17 Are there options to incentivise self-sustainable water supply? – gov subsidies	(P) Water Corporation will provide further information ahead of, or at, the next CCG meeting

Overall, there were a number of comments through this section about the need for this group (and the wider community) to be confident that the Water Corporation assumptions on demand and their proposed solution (desalination) are valid before proceeding.

The group was also wanting to be confident that all other options have been explored (e.g., water treatment, private water capture and storage, placing requirements on any new development to harvest and supply their own water, management of system leakages). It was suggested that the aggregate of these options may satisfy the need.

4 Introduction to Desalination

Julia Phillips, Senior Principal – Marine Science, Environment Team from the Corporation built on the briefing pack information provided in advance of the meeting, generating the following questions and discussion.



Key points being that discharge doesn't make the ocean saltier, as it is returning the same level of salt that was extracted back to the ocean. The discharge is concentrated due to the water extraction but returns to surrounding salinity levels within approx. 10s of meters. Each site is custom designed to meet the required environmental conditions and regulation requirements, in accordance with the EPA's Environmental Quality Management Framework (EQMF) for the state's marine waters.

CCG questions/comments	Corporation responses
1 How far apart are sub-sea inlet and outlet equipment?	The specifics are calculated for each site to meet the environmental conditions. For an output of this size, it is estimated that the discharge would return to normal surrounding salinity levels within 10s of meters of the discharge site.
2 Can the proposed plant be scaled if more is needed?	The site will be developed to be scalable, currently targeting an output of 3.4GL per annum but scalable to 6GL. The plans would also allow additional capacity if needed on the one site, rather than creating new sites.
3 What is "deep water" when it comes to establishing the inlet and outlet equipment?	The specifics are calculated for each site to meet the environmental conditions. Ballpark would be 7-10m as a minimum.
4 What is the role of currents?	Currents would play a role and would be part of the site-specific calculations.
5 Can the Corporation show the bore fields and what will happen to saltwater ingress if there is too much draw on the aquifers?	This information can be provided.

5 Success Criteria

The following selection criteria has been developed by the Corporation to guide their site selection. There is a more detailed set of criteria that sits below these. The CCG was asked to review these criteria to determine if there are any gaps or further considerations required from the community perspective.

Social	Technical	Delivery & Operation	Economic	Environmental	Regulatory and Approvals
Aboriginal Heritage and Cultural Values	Feed Quality	Operability/Maintainability	Whole of Life Cost	Pressure on Natural Water Resources	Environmental ad Regulatory Approvals
Political Priorities	Supply Quality	Treatment Process	CAPEX	Ecological Impacts	Time to Prepare Approvals
Local Community Sentiment	Scheme Impacts	Constructability	OPEX	Environmental Impact of Construction	Time to Obtain Approvals
Customer Sentiment	Scope 1&2 GHG Emissions	Time	Investment Confidence	Environmental Impact of Operation	Department of Health
Place Based Impacts – Short Term	Scope 3 GHG Emissions	Service Reliability		Clearing Offsets	Land Tenure
Place Based Impacts – Long Term		Resilience to Climate Change	Cost per Volume		Acceptance by Other Government Agencies
Liveability Impacts		Adaptability	Local Economy Benefit		Acceptance by Financing Decision Maker
		Safety			

CCG comments:

- Include short and long term in environmental impacts
  - This is currently captured in construction and operational and environmental impacts
- Include life expectancy of desal
  - This is currently captured in OPEX and investment confidence
- Remove political priorities
  - This is a challenging reality that needs to remain as a consideration
- Include initial cost and long-term offset
  - This is currently captured in OPEX and investment confidence
- Include confidence in running cost
  - This is currently captured in OPEX
- Include intake, outflow, and plant
  - This is part of the environmental considerations
- Include Energy consumption considerations
  - This is currently in Scope 1, 2, & 3 Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions

6 Investigation Areas

Matthew Bowman outlined the work completed since 2009 to explore possible sites.

The two current investigation areas include the Nanarup area and the Sandpatch area.

CCG questions/comments	Corporation responses
1 What is the budget?	The budget is considered within the merits of an overall business case, which mean while there is no specific dollar value, any cost to Western Australia tax payers needs to stack up socially, economically and environmentally.
2 Can we hear the Corporation's process from here and perspectives of both sites on selection criteria?	This can be provided in the coming meeting
3 What is the Corporation's timeline to get the required data?	The timelines require a preferred site by the end of 2025 to enable the detailed, site-specific investigations to commence.
4 Can a topographical map be provided to assess scouring of sand?	(P) Water Corporation will provide further information as part of a future meeting
5 What is the construction methodology?	This can be discussed in future meetings, once a site has been selected.

Some concerns were expressed about the impact of using buoys for site investigations on whales in the area, given a whale recently died from becoming tangled in rope line. There was also more information required about possible impact on whales within the Nanarup area.

7 Next Steps

The meeting concluded with discussion about the next steps, which generated the following comments.

1 There is a risk of upsetting the community by announcing these sites without making the case for why desal is needed.
    a. This was recognised as a risk and the project timelines currently require the broader community education to be run in parallel with the site investigations.

2 The group is keen to explore, if the case been made for desal?
    a. What other water sources have been investigated? E.g., new home owner, grey water.

3 There was a comment about the invitation for CCG members being broader than site selection for desal and focused more on sustainable water use.
    a. The expression of interest provided for the specific focus on desalination sites.

8 Appendix One - Attendance

CCR Members

	Name	Meeting 1
1	Aaron Williams	Present
2	Private Citizen	Present
3	Chris Meuzelaar	Present
4	Private Citizen	Apology
5	Diane Evers	Present
6	Frank Ruggera	Present
7	Private Citizen	Apology
8	Harm Mulder	Present
9	Jeremy Hadlow	Present
10	Private Citizen	Apology
11	Jonathan Hoskin	Present
12	Joy Mealor	Present
13	Laura Bird	Present
14	Natalie Reeves	Present
15	Rebecca Freeman	Apology
16	Sam Williams	Present
17	Private Citizen	Present
18	Sarah-Louise Collins	Present
19	Wendy Coffey	Present

Water Corporation Staff

	Name	Meeting 1
1	Adrian Stewart	Present
2	Julia Phillips	Present
3	Matthew Bowman	Present
4	Sally Courboules	Present
5	Joel xxx	Present

– END –

EMAIL: admin@ahaconsulting.net.au
WEBSITE: ahaconsulting.net.au
PHONE: +61 8 9443 9474