Meeting 3 Notes

PROJECT: Future Water Source Community Consultation Group
CLIENT: Water Corporation
DATE: September 2025
VERSION: 1.0

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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 third of these meetings was held on 23rd September 2025 at the Water Corporation Offices in Albany from 5:00pm to 7:00pm.

Prior to the meeting, additional information requested by the CCG at meeting one was provided to CCG members, along with pre-reading in relation to Groundwater Replenishment.

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

The meeting covered three key topics:

1. A presentation from Palenque Blair, Environmental Engineer at Water Corporation on Groundwater Replenishment.
    - The slides from this presentation will be made available in the CCG portal and do not form part of this report.

2. Pulse Poll and exploring broader community engagement.
    - The group was asked to indicate their level of acceptance of the preferred option, being seawater desalination. They were then asked to consider the information they have received over the past few months and suggest what the wider community needs to know to support their understanding.

3. Refresh on the proposed desalination locations.

What follows are the core discussion points 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

3 Why not Groundwater Replenishment?

As part of the prereading, information was provided on Groundwater Replenishment (GWR). Palenque Blair, Environmental Engineer at Water Corporation, presented further details on GWR and why it was determined to not be suitable for the Lower Great Southern area.

The presentation covered the following key elements:

1. Groundwater replenishment = recycling wastewater that has been treated to drinking water quality by recharge to groundwater aquifers for later re-abstraction.
2. This source option was ruled out due to:
    a. considerable uncertainties about its feasibility and ability to deliver sufficient quantities of water
    b. the significant early investment in trials required before confidence might be achieved in an Albany GWR concept
    c. higher risks of not meeting required timeframes due to extensive trials and lengthy and complex approval processes, and uncertainty of community acceptance
3. Overview of the GWR process, the types of barriers and contaminants that are removed.
4. How it is undertaken in Perth and the difference between the Perth and Albany aquifers.
5. The timeframe required for planning through to commissioning.
6. A comparison of GWR and seawater desalination in Albany, in terms of energy use, cost, risk, timeline and water hardness.

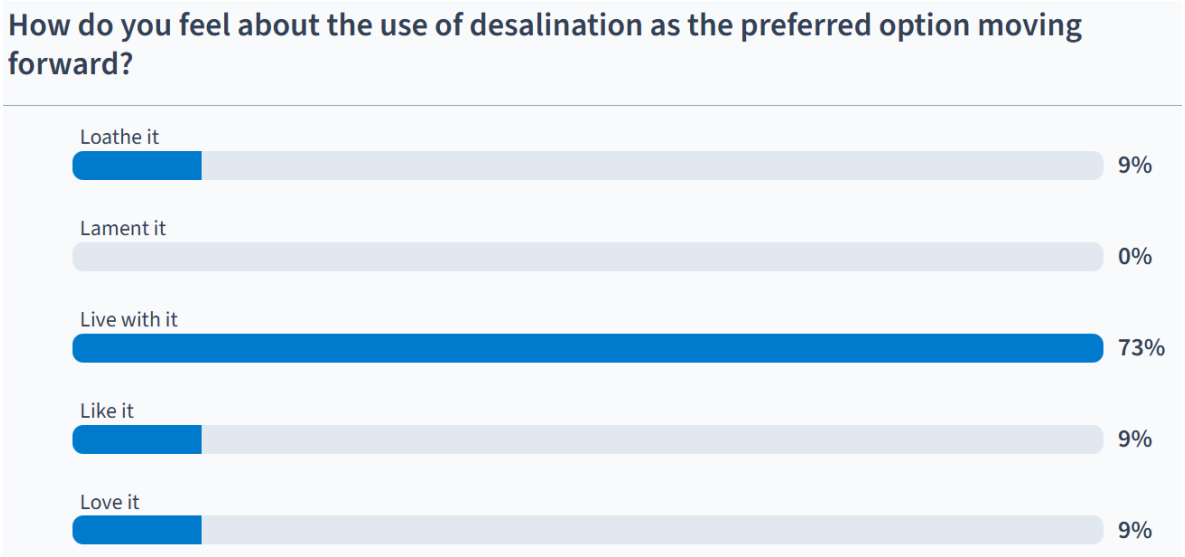
All of the presentation slides are available in the CCG portal for further reference.

4 Pulse Poll

At this point in the meeting, the CCG attendees were polled anonymously using an online tool, to determine the level of acceptance of the use of desalination. Individuals were asked to respond to the following question:

How do you feel about the use of desalination as the preferred option moving forward?

The poll used the following scale - a rating of 'Live with it', 'Like it' or 'Love it' is considered to be a positive indication of acceptance of the initiative.



Based on the above results, 91% of attendees were accepting of desalination as the preferred option moving forward. It is important to note that the majority of these (73%) indicated they are willing to 'Live with it', demonstrating that while it may not be their preferred choice (ie. Like or Love it), they understand the decision that has been made and are willing to accept this outcome.

Considering this, the group was asked why they selected their responses, and what further information would support a greater level of acceptance? The following feedback was provided:

- Would prefer if it was one of many options being considered – it would be more palatable if doing everything possible
- If we are keeping eyes and options open and keep exploring options for the future
- Loathe it because of low trust in the purpose of the group. Still not convinced, still feel there are other options available
    - Would like a break down of the costs presented to the group
- Would like to know if the assessment factored the energy use required into the cost – is there enough energy available?
- The GWR information supports my understanding
- It was also suggested that information should be presented from others (ie. not Water Corporation) as to why GWR can't be done (such as people from this group)

5 Broad community engagement

Carina Harris from Water Corporation provided an overview of the broad community engagement that is being undertaken. So far, community drop-ins have been conducted at All at Sea Saturday in July, and the Albany Farmers Market in August.

Below is a summary of what the team has heard so far.

5.1 Supporting the broader community

The group was asked, when considering all of the information they have been provided in recent months, what does the wider community need to know about to support them in understanding the approach?

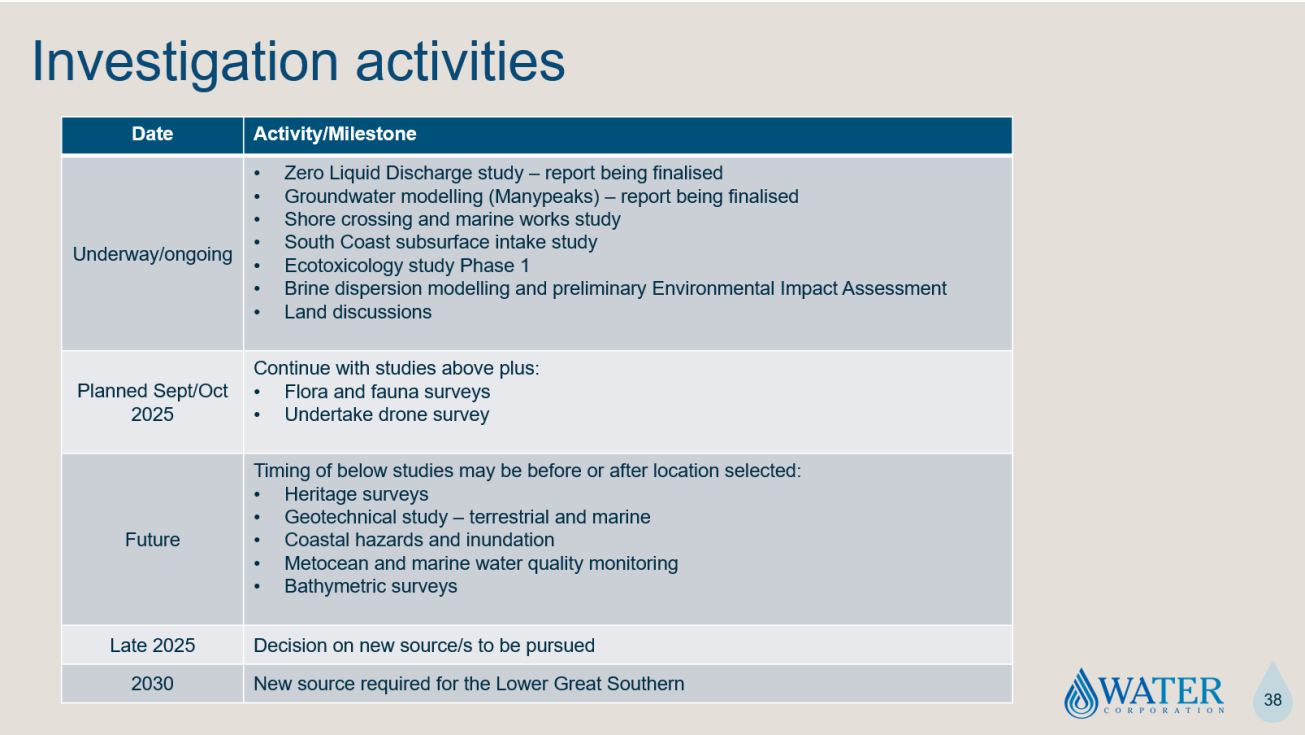
Below is a collation of what the group offered, which included both information they have been provided with, as well as some knowledge gaps that still remain that would be useful in supporting the community's understanding.

Theme	Comment
Explain desal process	Explain the outfall and intake process and its impact
	General understanding of desal process and possible issues – brine, location (operational and construction), environmental impacts
	Desal, unlimited water, wasteful
	More info on how brine can be treated without going back to ocean
Cost	What is the cost to water users? How will it be funded?
Explain why we need it	Why we need it – lower rainfall, increased population, etc
	Why do we need more water – the 5 year need for the Great Southern
	Graph of water needed vs population growth

	We need the water
Why not GWR	Details of why GWR is not viable due to aquifer
	Regulations by Dept of Health has impact on decision (not groundwater)
	Explain how aquifers/replenishment works
Explain decision-making process	Significant research undertaken into possible water options
'Other'	Power hungry offset by installing more wind turbines or such like clean energy
	Provide lots of information. Don't be afraid to provide everything
	Desal not the silver bullet, just a stop gap while other options are developed and explored
	Knowledge gap: the use of the King River aquifer. Why not use this resource?

6 Desalination Locations

Matthew Bowman from Water Corporation provided a recap of the two desalination sites being considered and the investigation activities currently being undertaken, highlighting the timeframe requiring a preferred site to be decided by late this year.



In addition, broad community engagement is continuing, with the following drop-ins scheduled.

- Tuesday 30 September 2025, 10am to 2pm at the Museum of the Great Southern
- Monday 6 October, 10am to 2pm at Albany's Historic Whaling Station
- Friday 7 & Saturday 8 November at the 2025 Albany Agricultural Show

The group took the opportunity to suggest that Water Corporation focus on using social media and other communications channels more. It was noted that real-time storytelling to the community of the process (including the CCG) is currently missing.

7 Request for additional information

While most questions were answered on the evening by Water Corporation staff, two questions were taken on notice due to the time constraints of the meeting:

1. Is left over tree farm water diverted to King River?
2. Did further away (ie. around King River) get considered for a location?

These will be responded to prior to the next meeting.

8 Appendix One – Attendance

CCG Members

	Name	Meeting 3	Meeting 2	Meeting 1
1	**Aaron Williams**	Apology	Apology	Present
2	**Anthony Wise**	Apology	Present	Present
3	**Chris Meuzelaar**	Present	Present	Present
4	**Derek van Buren**	Present	Present	Apology
5	**Diane Evers**	Present	Present	Present
6	**Frank Ruggera**	Present	Present	Present
7	**Gary Crockford**	Present	Present	Apology
8	**Harm Mulder**	Apology	Present	Present
9	**Jeremy Hadlow**	Present	Apology	Present
10	**Joy Mealor**	Apology	Present	Present
11	**Laura Bird**	Present	Present	Present
12	**Natalie Reeves**	Present	Apology	Present
13	**Rebecca Freeman**	Present	Present	Apology
14	**Sam Williams**	Apology	Apology	Present
15	**Sandra Swain**	Apology	Present	Present
16	**Sarah-Louise Collins**	Present	Present	Present
17	**Wendy Coffey**	Present	Present	Present

Water Corporation Staff

	Name	Meeting 3	Meeting 2	Meeting 1
1	**Adrian Stewart**	Present	Present	Present
2	**Julia Phillips**	Present	Apology	Present
3	**Matthew Bowman**	Present	Present	Present
4	**Sally Courboules**	Apology	Present	Present
5	**Joel Mclure**	Present	Present	Present
6	**Kym Williams**	Present	Present	Present
7	**Carina Harris**	Present	Present	Apology
8	**Palenque Blair**	Present	-	-

– END –

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