



**Government of
South Australia**



Northern Water Supply Project

Stakeholder Reference Group

Terms of Reference

March 2023

Final





Document Status

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Purpose

The purpose of the Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) is to provide an information conduit between the Northern Water Supply project team and stakeholder groups, some of which may also represent parts of the wider community.

The SRG forms one part of an integrated stakeholder and community engagement strategy.

In particular, the SRG aims to facilitate dialogue, discussion and information sharing about the Northern Water Supply project between project team members and key stakeholders about a range of interests.

The SRG will bring together stakeholders with a range of perspectives to discuss the Northern Water Supply project. Due to the nature of the group it is expected that there will be different perspectives on many issues and potential for competing views.

The SRG is an advisory group only and is not a decision-making group. As such the group will not be required to make any decisions by vote, by consensus, or by any other means.

Background

The Northern Water Supply (NWS) project is one of a number of projects being considered for the Upper Spencer Gulf as part of the State Government's plan to decarbonise local industry, provide for future jobs and economic development, and position the region as a global leader in the net-zero economy.

The South Australian Government is preparing a business case for the NWS project, which would provide a new and sustainable water supply for the far north and Upper Spencer Gulf, using seawater desalination. The project aims to sustainably support regional communities and industries now and into the future.

The Business Case will evaluate the environmental, social, economic and financial benefits and impacts of building a seawater desalination plant in the region, along with a 450km pipeline, which will transport the desalinated water to communities and industries in the Upper Spencer Gulf and Far North, including the emerging Hydrogen industry.

Should the Government decide to proceed with the project beyond the Business Case, detailed technical investigations and planning will commence alongside robust assessment of the social, environmental and economic impacts of any proposal.

Reference Groups

The SRG is one of a number of reference groups with varying levels of formality and interest in the NWS project. Other reference groups include:

Reference Group	Purpose
Spencer Gulf Sustainable Development Forum (formally SGEDI)	This forum aims to: • Clear approval pathways to reduce time and cost delays, which will greatly assist economic development. • Provide information, data, tools, capabilities and networks to assist approval pathways. • Ensure community support and comments are more evidence based. • Support a thriving Gulf region with progressive developments, community opportunity and the unique ecosystem is protected and enhanced - through effective consideration of cumulative, chronic and long-term environmental stresses.
Industry Partners Working Group	Working group between NWS project and potential customers, suppliers and other affected organisations
Technical Working Group	SA Government working group made up of key representatives of SA Government and Commonwealth agencies to support the EIS
USG Project Local Government and Regional Development Reference Group	Working group between SA Government Upper Spencer Gulf project and Local Government/Regional Development organisations

Objectives

The objectives of the Stakeholder Reference Group are to:

- Create an opportunity to discuss and exchange information about the project to assist the project team to identify local issues or concerns, and where possible solutions to these issues and concerns.
- Provide a broad representation of local community interests and views, as opposed to individual interests, that will assist to shape the project.
- Support accountable and transparent processes.
- Act as a two-way communication link between the project teams and the community and disseminate accurate information via existing community networks.

Management

The SRG will be established and managed by the SA Government NWS project team, Infrastructure SA.

SRG meetings will be arranged and facilitated by the NWS Stakeholder Engagement Manager.

Meetings will be open only to members of the SRG. Members may nominate a Proxy to attend in their place. It will be the member's responsibility to provide the department, prior to the

meeting, the proxy's declared interests, brief the proxy and provide them with the Agenda and Notes of Discussion of the previous meeting in advance of the meeting.

Attendance and participation will be documented as part of the evaluation reporting process. In the event that more than 50% of the membership are unable to attend, the meeting may be re-scheduled.

The agenda will be prepared by ISA and distributed to members at least five working days prior to the meeting.

Agenda items will be added or modified in future as required. The facilitation of the Reference Group meetings will be managed by the NWS project team. Notes of Discussion of the Reference Group's formal meetings, summarising the discussions that took place, will be undertaken by the NWS project team. A copy will be distributed to all members and posted online within 7 working days of the meeting.

All correspondence addressed to the group should be sent to NWS Stakeholder Engagement Manager for distribution to the group. This will allow all correspondence to be properly recorded as part of a formal meeting, thus ensuring transparency, open sharing of information, and good record keeping.

The Department will continue to tailor Stakeholder Reference Group meetings in line with the latest COVID-19 advice from health authorities. Reference Group meetings may be restricted and the department will continue to be guided by the advice of health authorities, with the health and safety of our stakeholders always our highest priority.

Membership

The Stakeholder Reference Group aims to represent the broadest possible range of stakeholder and community interests and views. Membership may include representatives from:

- Relevant Local Government organisations
- Environment/Conservation Groups
- Traditional Owners
- Marine advocacy groups
- Landholders
- Residents, businesses, tourism operators and community
- Commercial fisheries and aquaculture, and
- Recreational fishers.

Interim membership will be the invited attendees to the Site Selection Workshop held in October 2022.

A call for members will be facilitated by Infrastructure SA should the Government decide to proceed with the project beyond the Business Case.

Representatives of organisations/interest groups will be selected based on their organisation's involvement in and representation of the interests of the local community, local knowledge and capacity to share information throughout the local (and wider) community and/or to their membership base.

Individuals may nominate to participate and will be selected on the basis of their declared interests; local knowledge; other specialist knowledge relevant to the project; involvement in community networks; capacity to share information throughout the local community (within the program area) and willingness to agree to the Term of Reference for the group.

Members may be consulted by NWS regarding their membership and intent to remain in the Reference Group.

Membership will be voluntary. Individual persons, or volunteer members representing not-for-profit organisations may be reimbursed for a sitting fee and travel expenses in accordance with the reimbursement policy contained within Appendix A.;

Infrastructure SA (ISA) reserves the right to amend or change the operation of the Reference Group. Any changes will be discussed and communicated with the group.

Term

The term of appointment for the Reference Group will be until 30 June 2024 (which is the expected date of approval of the environmental impact assessment).

A review of the purpose, membership and ongoing need for the SRG will be undertaken by ISA in June 2024.

Responsibilities

Members of the SRG agree to:

- Attend and contribute to meetings.
- Work to the public sector values of Collaboration, Honesty, Excellence, Enjoyment and Respect.
- Operate within the scope of the Terms of Reference.
- Contribute, listen and cooperate and uphold the integrity of the engagement process.
- Value all opinions, accepting that individuals will at times differ in their views.
- Work to build a positive and proactive working relationship with project team
- Discuss and distribute information to other individuals or groups in their community and provide objective and balanced information in keeping with the spirit of the engagement process.
- Maintain open communication and sharing of information with other members while also respecting the need for confidentiality when requested on sensitive project discussions.

- Strive to resolve disagreements promptly through open and honest discussion either within the group or privately with the individual(s) concerned.
- Promote the use of contacting the NWS project team.

ISA and the NWS project team agree to:

- Work to build a positive and proactive working relationship with reference group members based on mutual respect and trust.
- Agree to work to the public sector values of Collaboration, Honesty, Excellence, Enjoyment and Respect.
- Maintain open communication and share accurate information with members about the NWS project.
- Listen and value the opinions of all reference group members.
- Consider and provide timely responses to reference group members about matters raised and relevant to the NWS project.
- Communicate how input from the SRG has been incorporated into the project.
- Be transparent and honest in communicating when information will be available to the reference group members
- Create an opportunity for discussion and exchange of information on the project.

Informing decision-making

The SRG is not a decision-making group. The SRG will operate within a consultative framework and will not be asked to make any decisions by voting, by consensus or by any other means. The intention of the time together is to better understand the range of issues and perspectives, not to seek consensus. The group will provide perspectives and advice to that will assist the project team.

Any input from the SRG will be carefully considered by the project team in light of the overall project objectives as well as statutory requirements and government policy.

Responsibility for all final decisions will be made by the department.

The project team commits to listening to the perspectives of the SRG members, recording discussions and providing feedback about how input has been included in the project.

At times Infrastructure SA may not be in a position to disclose confidential or Cabinet sensitive information to SRG members on specific project elements, activities and initiatives.

It is noted that some member organisations of the SRG have advocacy, decision making and approval roles potentially related to the NWS. Participation in the SRG does not seek to minimise any of these functions as they relate to the NWS. The SRG is intended to support the execution of these roles by providing a forum for open and transparent discussion of issues that are important to these organisations and others.

Structure

The structure of the meetings will be as follows:

- Meeting dates are proposed to bi-monthly (Wednesday/Thursday).
- Meeting venue, Meeting will generally be online. It is anticipated that about one in three meetings shall be on site in Whyalla or the Upper Spencer Gulf area
- Light refreshments will be provided at face to face meetings.
- Standing agenda items will include, but not limited to:
 - a. Acknowledgment of Country
 - b. Welcome/apologies
 - c. Conflict of Interest
 - d. Meeting Notes from previous meeting
 - e. Review of actions from previous meeting
 - f. Project update (may include guest presenter)
 - g. Round table discussion (potentially incorporated in update sections)
 - h. Other business
 - i. Next meeting.

Speaking to the media, posting on social media or speaking to others outside of the Stakeholder Reference Group

While members of the SRG are not prevented from speaking to the media about the project, posting on Social Media or talking to others outside of the Reference Group generally, any statements must be made clearly in terms of a personal view (or that of your organisation if appropriate) rather than that of the SRG, unless prior approval to do so has been granted by the department.

Members should not seek to represent the views of other members of the Group without their permission, and the confidentiality of other members and their personal views should be respected.

Members are also expected to state that any comments are personal views if posting content on social media regarding matters that have been discussed at the meetings or the project generally (while also respecting the confidentiality of other participants).

Infrastructure SA would appreciate being advised if any member intends to speak to the media or post social media content on matters discussed at the SRG meetings or the project in general.

Infrastructure SA may ask SRG members to contribute to communications materials including media releases.

Disclaimer

Many organisations involved with the SRG have statutory and regulatory responsibilities. Participation in the SRG is not intended to replace any requirements in relation to their designated responsibilities.

