
**LAKE WYANGAN & CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON
THURSDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2026 COMMENCING AT 5:00 PM**

PRESENT

Councillor Tony O'Grady, Councillor Laurie Testoni, Councillor Mark Dal Bon (Councillor - Alternate), Councillor Shari Blumer, Frank Battistel (Community Representative), Reginald Brown (Community Representative), Scott Collis (Community Representative), Ema Munro (Community Representative), Lisa Parker (Community Representative), Jade Salvestro (Community Representative), John Tagliapietra (Community Representative), Kelvin Williams (Community Representative)

Bernadette Torresan, One Basin CRC (Zoom)
Margot Rawsthorne, University of Sydney (Zoom)

Quorum = 3

STAFF

General Manager, Scott Grant, Director Sustainable Development, Joe Rizzo, Urban Strategic Design & Major Projects Manager, Peter Badenhorst

Councillor Tony O'Grady assumed the Chair due to the Mayor being an apology for this meeting.

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mayor Doug Curran, Lyndsay Golsby-Smith (Murrumbidgee Irrigation) Councillor Scott Groat and Environment & Public Health Coordinator, Vanessa Johns

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Jade Salvestro and Councillor Tony O'Grady that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 March 2026, having first been circulated amongst all members, be confirmed.

3 BUSINESS ARISING

Nil.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Pecuniary Interests

There were no pecuniary interests declared.

Significant Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were no significant non-pecuniary interests declared.

Less Than Significant Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were no less than significant non-pecuniary interests declared.

5 ITEMS OF BUSINESS

CL01 PRESENTATION BY BERNADETTE TORRESAN, ONE BASIN CRC

Ms Bernadette Torresan, Regional Manager, One Basin Cooperative Research Centre, provided an overview of the organisation and its role in supporting research to address challenges throughout the Murray-Darling Basin. She advised that One Basin CRC works collaboratively with industry, government and research organisations. Ms Torresan presented on a current research project examining the use of biochar as a potential water quality improvement tool.

The project has identified an opportunity to utilise large volumes of agricultural residues to produce biochar, which may assist in addressing water quality issues, including blue-green algae. A business case for Griffith has been developed to assess suitable feedstocks, potential biochar products and the economic viability of the technology. The next phase will involve laboratory and field trials, with Lake Wyangan identified as a primary case study site.

Ms Torresan advised that the project aims to deliver sustainable water quality outcomes across the region, with potential applications at lakes, wetlands and agricultural sites. Research will assess the long-term performance of biochar, including the nutrients and contaminants captured through the filtration process. Several possible deployment methods were raised, including use within inflow channels and floating treatment systems. Ms Torresan advised that a range of approaches would be investigated as part of the research.

Discussion highlighted the salinity issues within Lake Wyangan. Ms Torresan noted that the current research has primarily focused on blue-green algae; however, future testing could also examine salinity management options. Council staff advised that salinity data collected for the Lake could be made available to support the research.

Ms Torresan advised that initial laboratory testing would commence in the coming months, followed by trials at Lake Wyangan. Should the technology prove effective, biochar could offer a cost-effective option to improve water quality while complementing other long-term management strategies being considered for the lake.

Councillor Dal Bon entered the meeting at 5.20 pm.

Mr Scott Grant entered the meeting at 5.22 pm.

In further discussion, members acknowledged community interest in progressing water quality improvements at Lake Wyangan. Council staff noted that no single solution is likely to resolve all water quality issues and emphasised the importance of evidence-based decision making. It was further noted that the proposed research trials would be undertaken at no

cost to Council and would provide valuable scientific data to inform future recommendations and investment decisions. Additionally, discussions regarding alternative water management options, including "water in, water out" strategies, would continue.

CL02 PRESENTATION BY MARGOT RAWSTHORNE, UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Ms Margot Rawsthorne and Ms Amanda Howard, University of Sydney, provided an overview of the Water Futures project, an initiative, funded through the One Basin Cooperative Research Centre.

The presenters advised that the project adopts a community-led approach, bringing together community members, industry and researchers to identify local priorities and develop practical solutions. Unlike traditional research projects, Water Futures enables communities to determine the issues most important to them and work collaboratively to design and implement responses.

Examples of projects undertaken in other Basin communities include citizen science initiatives focused on water quality and river health, education programs reconnecting communities with local waterways and projects supporting employment and social inclusion. The presenters noted that community priorities are often diverse and extend beyond water quality to include broader social, environmental and economic outcomes.

The presenters highlighted the benefits of strengthening connections between communities across the Murray-Darling Basin, noting that sharing experiences and knowledge may help reduce conflict and foster greater collaboration.

Ms Parker expressed interest in partnering with the University of Sydney on a collaborative project, such as a Carpathon, to assist in improving water quality.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Lisa Parker and Frank Battistel that Council staff investigate options to hold Carpathon events to remove Carp from Lake Wyangan.

Ema Munro left the meeting at 5:52 pm.

CL03 RESIGNATION OF COMMITTEE MEMBER

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Councillor Laurie Testoni and Frank Battistel that the Committee accept Matthew Woodward's resignation and the Terms of Reference be updated.

CL04 LAKE WYANGAN WATER QUALITY MONITORING - UPDATE

Mr Rizzo provided an update on water quality monitoring. Initial feedback has been positive, with Council awaiting confirmation from Ventia regarding their operational status.

The Committee discussed opportunities to improve public access to water quality information, including incorporating QR codes on signage to direct users to the Council website. Mr Rizzo advised that quotations for updated signage are currently being obtained.

CL05 AQUATIC PROJECTS PTY LTD - LAKE WYANGAN WATER TREATMENT

Mr Rizzo provided an overview of a water treatment technology demonstration undertaken by Aquatic Projects Pty Ltd at Lake Wyangan. The demonstration formed part of a project being progressed through the office of Mrs Helen Dalton MP, with Lake Wyangan selected

as the demonstration site.

The Committee was advised that the technology is intended as a long-term water quality management solution. The next stage of the project would involve an assessment to determine the most suitable system configuration for Lake Wyangan, with a cost estimate to be provided following completion of that assessment.

Members sought clarification regarding the treatment process, including the management of nutrients, contaminants and sludge generated by the system. It was noted that the technology pumps water through an above-ground treatment process before returning it to the Lake and includes a mechanism for removing accumulated sludge. Concerns were raised regarding operational and maintenance costs and scalability for a large water body such as Lake Wyangan.

Committee members discussed whether the technology would be effective in addressing salinity and acknowledged that further technical and cost information would be required before any commitment could be considered.

Members noted that this option was unlikely to represent a stand-alone solution and may be more effective as part of a broader suite of water quality improvement measures, including treatment of inflows and drainage channels entering the Lake.

Councillor Testoni emphasised the need to fully understand the financial implications of the proposal and queried the availability of grant funding to support future investigation or implementation. The Committee agreed that the opportunity could be pursued as a pilot project should external grant funding become available.

Councillor Shari Blumer left the meeting at 6.07 pm and returned at 6.09 pm.

In response to questions regarding water transfer infrastructure, Mr Rizzo advised that Council holds approval from Murrumbidgee Irrigation to pump water from the northern lake system. While infrastructure previously transferred to Council is currently non-operational, water levels can be managed through the existing gates if required. It was also noted that Murrumbidgee Irrigation can accept up to 20 megalitres per day, subject to water quality requirements.

6 OUTSTANDING ACTION REPORT

The Committee reviewed the Action Report.

Ms Parker enquired if Council would consider appointment of a dedicated Lake Wyangan Project Officer position. Mr Grant advised that additional budget allocation and Council endorsement would be required before such a position could be established.

The Committee discussed potential water transfer arrangements for Lake Wyangan with an interested landowner. Mr Rizzo advised that further investigation is required, including discussions with the relevant landowner. A report will be provided to the next Committee meeting for consideration.

CLOSED COMMITTEE REPORT

CC01 HYDRO2050 LAKE WYANGAN CYANOBACTERIA TREATMENT PROPOSAL

Mr Rizzo provided an overview of the report and the water quality improvement options currently being investigated for Lake Wyangan. During discussion, Ms Parker noted that while the proposed treatment technology appeared technically sound, the implementation

costs were significant.

The Committee did not proceed with a recommendation to endorse the Hydro2050 proposal due to the costs involved.

Committee members discussed a range of potential solutions. In response to questions regarding the establishment of wetlands, Mr Rizzo advised that a constructed wetland solution could cost in the order of \$2 million.

Councillor Blumer left the meeting at 6.29 pm.

Mr Grant advised that Council is continuing discussions with Griffith Local Aboriginal Land Council (GLALC) regarding opportunities to improve water flows into the lake. He further advised that a previous funding application seeking approximately \$3.3 million for a number of lake improvement projects had been unsuccessful however Council would continue to investigate funding options.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Frank Battistel and John Tagliapietra that Council expedite discussions with the interested landowner regarding options to pump water into and out of Lake Wyangan, and that staff provide a report back to the Committee on the outcomes of those discussions.

7 GENERAL BUSINESS

7.1 Water Allocation and Future Water Quality Initiatives

Mr Tagliapietra queried whether additional water would be introduced to Lake Wyangan prior to Christmas to maintain water levels through the summer period. Mr Rizzo noted that the proposal would have financial implications and would need to identify the volume of water required and the associated cost.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of John Tagliapietra and Scott Collis that Council investigate the allocation of 1,000 megalitres of water to Lake Wyangan to compensate for evaporation losses and maintain water levels above critical thresholds.

During further discussion, it was noted that any decision regarding additional water allocations would need to be balanced against other Council priorities, including the potential value of trading water allocations.

7.2 Pilot Project - Aquatic Projects Pty Ltd

The Committee discussed the merits of the project discussed in CL05. Mr Grant advised that validation of the project would be required to determine whether the technology is effective and scalable for Lake Wyangan. Further cost assessments would then be required to determine the feasibility of implementation across the north and south lakes.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Lisa Parker and Frank Battistel that Council investigate grant funding opportunities to progress the proposed pilot project and if grant funding is not available, the project be considered for progression through a Quarterly Review.

7.3 Road Condition

A concern was raised regarding possible leakage and erosion occurring along the roadway between the two lakes. Mr Rizzo undertook to investigate the matter further.

7.4 Council Officer Position

The Committee discussed the potential need for dedicated environmental resources to support ongoing monitoring and management of Lake Wyangan water quality.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Lisa Parker and Scott Collis that Council investigate the establishment of an environmental officer position, similar to the former Lake Wyangan Catchment Project Officer role, and prepare a report for the Committee's consideration.

8 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Lake Wyangan & Catchment Management Committee is to be held on Thursday, 17 December 2026 at 5:00 pm (to be confirmed).

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 6:52 pm.