



## **Agenda Legatus Group CWMS Advisory Committee**

**2 August 2023 2pm**

Via Zoom Meeting

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#### Attachments:

1. Proposal to LGA CWMS Management Committee
2. Letter resignation Mayor Leon Stephens

## **1. Welcome**

Chairperson to be confirmed.

## **2. Attendance:**

Members: Mayor Rodney Reid (ex-officio), Gary Easthope, Kirsty Morgan, Grant Smith and Nathan Berry.

Non-Members: Simon Millcock and Tracey Rains (Legatus Group)

## **3. Apologies**

## **4. Conflict of Interest TBA**

## **5. Minutes of previous meeting**

The draft Minutes from the previous meeting held on 9 May 2023 were distributed to all members and can be found at <https://legatus.sa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/UnconfirmedMinutes-9-May-2023.pdf>

These were provided to the 19 May 2023 Legatus Group meeting.

**Recommendation: That the Legatus Group Community Wastewater Management Scheme Advisory Committee minutes of the 9 May 2023 be taken as read and confirmed.**

## **6. Business Arising**

### **6.1 Legatus Group / CWMS Advisory Committee / Joint Services Agreement**

Author: Simon Millcock

The Legatus Group have adopted the 2023/2024 Legatus Group Business Plan which includes Waste Management – Wastewater. With support for (1) the Legatus Group Community Wastewater Management Scheme Advisory Committee and (2) the extended life of systems using wetlands project in collaboration with UniSA, Yorke Peninsula Council, LGA SA and SA2050. There is no specific allocation of funds in the budget for project work.

The updated draft Legatus Group Strategic Plan was not approved (included support for CWMS) and there will be an independent review to be undertaken of the Legatus Group Charter and Strategic Plan during September to November 2023.

Following the recommendation from the Advisory Committee and endorsement at the February 2023 Legatus Group meeting an application for a further extension (Attachment A) for the Joint Services Arrangement was submitted to the LGA CWMS Management Committee.

Advice received in June 2023 was that the application was not successful and that after considering the funding request and the content of the proposal they declined the proposal at the current time. The Research and Development (R&D) fund for CWMS is being increased in 2023/24 and a call for proposals will occur with an invite to the Legatus Group to submit a submission in support of the CWMS Sector (which can include differing elements).

They advised that the Joint Services Arrangement has delivered some great outcomes to date and there is definitely intent to retain workshops and the annual conference amongst the support initiatives.

They will ensure that the Legatus Group CEO is advised of on when the 2023/24 R&D call for proposals occurs.

Paul Chapman was employed through funding by the LGA CWMS Management Committee and Legatus Group via the Joint Services Agreement which expired in June 2023.

A final report for the 2022/2023 Joint Services Agreement has yet to be completed as it is awaiting the outcome of the July 2023 Legatus Group CWMS Advisory Committee meeting.

## **Recommendation**

- 1. That the committee receives and notes the report.**
- 2. Recommends the Legatus Group advocates to the LGA that they support the development of a model for a Local Government Sector CWMS Alliance / Committee.**
- 3. Recommends the Legatus Group submits an application for funding to the CWMS Research and Development scheme for the Legatus Group to deliver regional workshops and the annual conference.**

## **6.2 CWMS Annual Conference**

Author: Simon Millcock

The 2023 CWMS Annual Conference was held on 8 June 2023 at the UniSA - UniHub Light Square with 66 people attending. The Minister for Local Government Hon Geoff Brock opened the conference and the Chair of the LGA CWMS Managamnet Committee Mayor Leon Stephens and LGA CEO Clinton Jury both attended and all spoke. There was a good cross section of people from the local government sector (predominantly operators), industry, regulators and researchers.

23 Councils were represented with 10 of these being Legatus Group Councils. The program was developed in consultation with David Eggers and Thomas McKellar after the initial draft program had been presented to the LGA CWMS Managamnet Committee. The Legatus Group CEO took the opportunity at the conference to acknowledge the work of Dr Paul Chapman who had been the Legatus Group Project Manager for CWMS.

The Legatus Group CEO facilitated a workshop during the conference and the issues raised that councils are seeking support with included:

- Limited “ownership” options associated with the IP
- Whole of Life costs associated with new projects
- Central knowledge base e.g. knowledge broker aware of the various schemes and how they and managed / who can direct people to others
- Lots of new technologies and innovations – these are not being utilised / taken up – what is happening nation wide
- Resource sharing – the benefits and risks – could be more of this – who facilities
- Support with contract and contractor management – how to monitor contractors – who has the knowledge – what are the risks
- Lack of skills within the sector re managing the systems and across the organisations with asset management
- Corporate buy in from across the council – need to have the organisation invested not just the individual
- Great clarity on the funding available:
  - New
  - Expanding

- Replacement
  - Support with understanding the service charges – full cost recovery
  - Understanding the maintenance requirements
  - Revaluation of assets – accuracy of the costs
  - Understanding the infrastructure that is out of sight – quality of the infrastructure and record keeping – how can technology better assist
  - Ability to provide most effective use of the resource / water / sludge
  - Proactive v Reactive
  - Replacement at end of Life

Observations by the Legatus Group CEO:

Regional or state based forums on waste / roads tend to receive interest from Elected Members and Senior Management. There continues to be less interest in CWMS as at the State Conference only 1 Mayor who is Chair of LGA CWMS and 2 CEOs from councils were there and that was because the CEOs were presenting. Good to see the strong interest from the LGA CEO.

The conference was held in Adelaide for the first time and had the largest number attending of the 4 conferences with many new faces. Less interaction though this year with the informal gathering the night before and the inability to undertake site visits.

UniSA again provided the venue as part of its partnership with the Legatus Group through their MoU, which assisted with keeping the price low. The management and coordination through the Joint Services Arrangements between the Legatus Group and LGA CWMS Management Committee also ensured that the coordination / administration costs and marketing was covered. As such the small fee of \$45 assisted with covering some of the costs of catering. Similar type events run by the LGA or LG Professionals would cost significantly more. Given the travel and accommodation costs to attendees the recommendation would be to continue to make the conference affordable.

Note that there is no funding for the Legatus Group (refer item 6.1) to continue this work which had been identified in the Joint Services Arrangements.

Direct feedback from attendees:

- I also wanted to say thank you to you and everyone involved in organising the CWMS Conference. It was the first time I have attended this event as CWMS is new to me and found it to be informative and interesting. I took a lot away from yesterday and will certainly be back for the next one.
- I just wanted to touch base to commend you a great conference, with really good content and attendance.

A survey was undertaken and resulted in a 25% response rate and Legatus Group CEO comments are included after each question and its response.

Q1 How satisfied are you with the variety of topics presented at the SA CWMS Conference

- Very satisfied 56%
- Satisfied 32%
- Neutral 6%
- Very dissatisfied 6%

**Comment: Good result.**

Q2 The amount of information presented at the SA CWMS Conference was of value.

- 40% Strongly agree.
- 47% Agree
- 13% Neutral

**Comment: Excellent result.**

Q3 What was the most interesting part of the conference?

1. All of the presentations were interesting and highly relevant as were many of the issues raised by attended.
2. Listening to the real life stories of Councils - Fisherman Bay and Mid Murray were really interesting.
3. Councils share information on how they manage the water and wastewater assets.
4. Loved hearing about other people's experiences.
5. Hearing from Councils firsthand how ownership and operation of their schemes was a great benefit to them if run correctly.
6. There was a good variety of topics.
7. All
8. Hearing about Council's experiences and projects
9. The group discussions
10. The workshop discussions at the end of the conference.
11. Diversity of council experiences presented and expressed during discussion (workshop) session.
12. Case studies – workshop.
13. The Workshop.
14. Discussion with peers
15. Well-coordinated , good case studies, excellent catering

**Comment: Value in the case studies / workshop / networking / which is one of the key reasons for the conference.**

Q 4 What part of the conference could have been strengthened?

1. No suggestions.
2. The workshop session could have been removed and done via a quick survey to all 68 Councils across the state. Handwritten sticky labels for name tags are not suitable and reduce the ability for people to network.
3. The conference could be longer, full day to include more cases from different water entities.
4. I think a key role this provides is creating connections between Councils, increasing the length of the conference to include an overnight stay would encourage connections to be made between the Councils which would be invaluable to most, especially those that are isolated.
5. Speakers after lunch, had minimal engagement for attendees and many left.
6. I was happy with the subject provided.
7. Direction of CEO panel and final workshop.
8. Make it longer to have more presentations.
9. Allow more time for the workshop discussion.
10. Program distributed in advance. (Apologies if I missed this through the registration process).
11. Workshopping - more time and maybe smaller groups feeding back to the larger group rather than just everyone together.
12. Not easy to find the venue.

**Comment: Mixed responses but valuable for further events.**

Q 5 Do you have any suggestions for next year's event?

1. Given the anticipated timing for the NPR reporting it might be useful to get an update from the OTR on progress and to respond to any questions from operators.
2. Split the conference into technical and strategic sessions to upskill our technical officers and include a conference dinner - networking between people is the most important thing. Also proper name tags on lanyards with name, position, workplace - so that networking can occur.
3. The matter that is commonly raised is that CWMS are generally under managed (ie against the efforts and funding of roads in LG) and that there needs to be some higher focuses on CWMS to meet regs and compliance. PS, well done Legatus for making this a subject matter.
4. More information or direction from regulatory authorities of their expectations.
5. Continue to include a good variety of Council presentations and it's always worthwhile to include a workshop to allow Council's to collaborate and provide feedback.
6. A section on funding of investments and pricing of CWMS services.
7. Potentially breakout into smaller working groups to discuss key issues and then share ideas.
8. Next year consideration could be given to drawing out further different themes: a) building CWMS for future growth; b) solutions for effective LG knowledge sharing; c) effective business planning, contract/project management.
9. Academic papers are of limited interest unless they relate to real at scale trials and have definite outcomes.
10. Keep up to this standard.

**Comment: To be used for future conference preparation.**

Q 6 Would you return to a CWMS Conference 100% Yes response

**Comment: Great result they see value.**

Q7 Where should it be held 19% Regional SA 25% Adelaide and 56% no preference.

**Comment: Rotation could continue.**

**Recommendation:**

1. That the committee receives and notes the report.
2. That the Legatus Group CEO report is provided to the LGA CWMS Management Committee with a recommendation that the conference continues on an annual basis, that the Legatus Group CWMS Advisory Committee offers to support the development of the 2024 program and that the Legatus Group subject to securing financial support from the LGA undertakes the continued coordination and administration for the conference.
3. That the Legatus Group CEO writes to UniSA thanking them for their support.

### **6.3 On-line, on-demand CWMS training course + TAFE Certificate III**

Author Simon Millcock

1. Online on demand CWMS Training

Following the last advisory committee meeting discussions have been held with David Eggers and Thomas McKellar to gain an understanding of the progress from the recommendations from the January 2021 "Script development Community Wastewater Management Scheme ready for an online learning platform" report commissioned by the Legatus Group.

There was an initial offer to David and Thomas by the Legatus Group CEO to review the course content and provide feedback to the modules. This was withdrawn specific to the modules as it was thought people who have a better level of knowledge could provide this feedback.

Paul Chapman on 25 May 2023 provided the following comments.

A training course, tailored to regional CWMS Councils is needed. Regional CWMS are small and isolated, staff are only part-time and these complicated systems are unlike other Council assets.

These points have been made repeatedly by the Legatus CWMS Advisory Committee, motivating it to lead in developing the current version of the course.

The TAFE wastewater course is inadequate, as was made plain from discussions with Legatus Council staff who have undertaken the course and from a desktop review. The original briefing paper covering these matters and this presented to the Legatus CWMS Advisory Committee in 2019.

The paper advised that “the common view was that the content was too general and untargeted, relating more to SA Water and large plants than to Council operations”. According to one participant, the course should not be “about how to get a job at SA Water but how to best run our plants”.

The desktop review pointed out that “there is very little about local regulation and reporting requirements” and the relevant content “is cut and pasted from elsewhere”, from regulators’ websites. Further, “there are many, many errors e.g., misspellings, sentences without meaning, etc. This fits with the perception that TAFE has trouble with the quality of its courses.”

The current version of the course maintains the basic structure of the original draft and the content proceeds logically. The text and the progress testing are both mostly adequate so that the course succeeds in building an understanding of CWMS which is relevant to regional Councils.

As one example of the logical progression, Course 3, dealing with processing wastewater, provides an obvious and reasoned sequence, covering all regional CWMS technologies without unnecessary technical details.

As an illustration of the relevance, the Tumbay Bay example is well chosen. It is a mostly typical system with some advanced features, it is isolated and lacks dedicated staff, with only 0.5 FTE available for ‘a relatively complex’ system.

The last four courses dealing with regulation are weakest. They fail to explain the underlying principles, despite the stated learning outcome to “explain ... why (SA agencies) regulate CWMS”. For example, it is nowhere said that these are monopolies: users have no choice, Councils do not need to be efficient so ESCOSA regulates CWMS. Again, no reasons at all are given for the OTR’s voluminous reporting requirements.

In addition, the language is too much that of the regulators. For example, 6.1 describes the “potential to impact public health” rather than making the direct and obvious point, designed to get the student’s attention, that operating these assets is dangerous for people. Similarly, 7.1 provides direct quotes, in legalese, at length, to do no more than explain the concept of environmental harm.

Finally, the video soundtracks are amateurish. It is critical that the delivery be bright, smooth and pitched to the audience. The current version is stilted, slow and didactic in tone.

This course has been repeatedly promised and greatly delayed. The LGA has failed to provide appropriate direction and resources to make the detailed draft which had been provided by Legatus ready for release.

The tasks to complete it do not include major revisions. The video soundtracks need to be redone by professional recordists. They should also be made more accessible by being recast in the language and style of regional SA. The exceptions are the course dealing with regulation which should spell out clearer reasons for the compliance measures.

It will be important to create a process for final review by external stakeholders, including regulators, Councils and Legatus. One source of delay can be the final decision-making process. Regulatory agencies will want their own content to be used but this must be resisted. The course would be unneeded if the content they make public were adequate. In the end, this must be an LGA owned course for which it must be responsible.

## 2. TAFE Certificate III

The Legatus Group CEO was advised by David Eggers that he had been in contact with TAFE re their training course. The Legatus Group CEO was also approached by Phil Kotaras the Work, Health & Safety Officer at Port Pirie Regional Council who provides a shared service to the 6 Southern Flinders Ranges Councils advising that 11 staff across these councils are interested in undertaking training.

A meeting was arranged by the Legatus Group CEO and included Phil, David Eggers, Thomas McKellar and Richard Scott from TAFE to discuss:

1. Negotiating with TAFE re possibility of training Cert III - Water Industry Operations to be held in the Legatus Group region / and other regions (including identifying the cost / savings and numbers).
2. Legatus Group coordinating through our member councils and other Regional LGAs any possible interest.

The meeting was held and TAFE provided information on the updated training program they are delivering on the Eyre Peninsula. This meeting noted that there are 2 options for council staff to undertake the training:

1. Public courses which are available at Tonsley – these include facilitated on-line course.
2. Regional course – not available until 2024 and TAFE have capacity to deliver 1 with need for 14 participants. Would include 5 trips to the region and can incorporate site visits and be delivered over 18 months.

TAFE will send information on the course content and other relevant information and this will see the Legatus Group CEO liaise with the other 9 Legatus Group Councils to ascertain interest. Phil will follow up with the 11 who have shown interest and this information will be collated and presented to the Legatus Group CWMS Advisory Committee and also to the 15 Legatus Group CEOs at their July meetings.

Note that there is no funding for Legatus Group refer item 6.1 to continue this matter which had been identified in the Joint Services Arrangements.

### **Recommendation:**

1. **That the Advisory Committee notes the report.**



2. **Recommends to the Legatus Group that they advocate to the LGA that they should continue developing the CWMS online learning platform and that they seek input from experienced Councils.**
3. **Supports the Legatus Group CEO in continuing to investigate with TAFE and member councils on the possible delivery of the Cert III - Water Industry Operations to be held in the region.**

#### **6.4 UniSA and Yorke Peninsula CWMS expansion project**

Author Simon Millcock

The Legatus Group CEO have assisted UniSA in the coordination of securing funding for this project and along with the Legatus Group \$6,000 from the 2022/2023 budget a further \$3,000 funding has been secured from the LGA CWMS R&D Scheme. UniSA have also secured funding from SA2050.

Professor Ke Xing UniSA presented on this project at the 2023 SA CWMS Conference and the Legatus Group CEO will be part of the reference group. A Collaborative Research Agreement has been signed and this agreement has the following schedule.

##### Project Title

Extending the capacity of regional Community Wastewater Management Systems (CWMS) using Constructed Floating Wetlands (CFW) – Ardrossan

##### Description of Project

This project will test and fine tune plant selection and design CFW operations, investigate potential and effects of augmenting CFW with an additional active treatment technology, e.g. ultra-fine ozone bubbles, engage with the local stakeholders and spread the lessons of the work through the regional Local Government Areas.

The aim is to deliver at least 25% improvement in capacity. Other gains are anticipated in reduced energy consumption, operating costs and carbon footprint, making this project also an application of the Circular Economy principles. The research will also demonstrate how CFWs can utilise reclaimed materials and deliver sustainable, climate-resilient services to the regional community.

##### Milestones and timeframes

Milestones	Timeframes
Engage with local stakeholders	Introductory info: August 2023 Design and test rig presentation: September 2023 – November 2023 Project findings: April 2024
Test rig set-up and operation	September 2023 – March 2024
Interim report	30 November 2023
Engage with other Councils	Demonstration: October 2023 – January 2024 Dissemination: February-March 2024
Results and findings	March-April 2024 Final report 30 April 2024

##### Deliverables

1. Creating a suite of toolkits to make the case for CFW as an expansion option.
2. Discussing the results at a series of regional Workshops during 2023-24
3. Presenting the results at the next Annual CWMS Conference in mid-2024.

**Recommendation: that the Advisory Committee notes the report.**

**7. Other business - Membership**

Mayor Leon Stephens has submitted a letter of resignation (Attachment 2) from the Advisory Committee effective 30 June 2023.

**Recommendation: That the Legatus Group Community Wastewater Management Scheme Advisory Committee recommends the Legatus Group seeks to fill this vacancy.**

**8. Close and next meeting.**