



Chief Executive Officer's Report
June 2020

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1. Introduction

With Covid 19 restrictions beginning to ease across our four states of the Basin I will take a moment to reflect here on some of the impacts on our organisation of this pandemic, and of other events in what has been an intensely challenging first half of the year.

Covid 19 restrictions have seen our team, like so many others, having to pivot and respond in the way we do business and the way we deliver services. Our staff have moved to work from home, to phase in a staged return to the workplace, to implement social distancing, and to support our regions to make changes also.

We have had to realign project plans and deliverables which has impacted funding and cashflow, has intensified workloads and has required creative attention to managing and meeting expectations.

On a personal level our staff have had to variously self-isolate, to undertake testing (thankfully all clear) and to adapt and change in response to these circumstances.

All this set against the backdrop of the Black Summer bushfires, regional challenges and now the acute awareness of the need for social change to address fundamental humanitarian violations in racial inequality highlighted by the death in the US of George Floyd and the resultant global #BlackLivesMatter protests. It has been a challenging time.

But there are signs of hope.

Recent protests have signalled a global awareness, a calling out of the shame and the seeds of reform.

Recent rains have signalled a positive season ahead and the seeds of economic, and environmental recovery for many (though sadly not all) Basin communities.

And recent easing of Covid 19 restrictions have signalled a cautious return to social and working life with seeds of increased focus among us on the things that are important.

I am seeing our members, our communities and our team taking increased care of themselves and each other. We take the time to ask – are you ok? We reach out and we recognise ‘we are all in this together’.

With digital meetings comes the risk of virtual fatigue, for sure. But we also get to see a glimpse of the person behind the title, the position. A picture on a wall, a view out the window, or perhaps one of the kids or the family dog delightfully ‘photo-bombing’ a meeting held from home. And this connects us all.

Our members are becoming more comfortable with virtual meetings which is a great outcome for our regions. Our regions are more connected, and this is a great outcome for the MDA. And the MDA is more engaged with our members, our stakeholders, and the issues, and this is a great outcome for the local government and communities of the Murray Darling Basin.

This year has certainly had its challenges and has put into a broader context some of the struggles we have in the Murray Darling Basin. There are difficult times ahead, but I am confident that as a community ‘we’ve got this...”

2. Appointments

Date	Event/meeting	Location
18/05/2020	Board Meeting 398	Via Zoom
19/05/2020	Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists	Via Zoom
19/05/2020	Paul Newell – BCLP Leadership discussions	Via Zoom
20/05/2020	Michael Stewardson, Bern Spinks – One Basin CRC	Via Zoom
21/05/2020	Mick Keelty’s finding into the recent inquiry into water sharing arrangements	Via Zoom
25/05/2020	Jomablue virtual conference hosting presentation	Via Zoom
25/05/2020	GO1 virtual conference hosting presentation	Via Zoom
27/05/2020	Region 2 Ordinary Meeting	Via Zoom
27/05/2020	Karen Legge Consulting – MDA Strategic Plan	Via Zoom
27/05/2020	Monthly Secretariat Meeting	Via Zoom
28/05/2020	Karren Legge Consulting with Strategic Advisory Group	Via Zoom
28/05/2020	MDB roundtable - Wentworth Group	Via Zoom
29/05/2020	Karen Legge Consulting 2024 Strategic Plan discussions	Via Zoom
01/06/2020	Region 5 Ordinary Meeting	Via Zoom
01/06/2020	GO1 visual platform discussions re BCLP program	Via Zoom
02/06/2020	CSIRO Grand Challenges and Mission discussions	Via Zoom
03/06/2020	Floodplain Harvesting discussion. Cr Thurley & Cr MacAllister	Via Zoom
03/06/2020	Go1 visual platform discussion re BCLP program	Via Zoom
03/06/2020	Karren Legge Consulting 2024 Strategic Plan discussions	Via Zoom
04/06/2020	Karren Legge Consulting 2024 Strategic Plan discussions	Via Zoom
09/06/2020	Region 4 Ordinary Meeting	Via Zoom
10/06/2020	Murray Darling Basin Roundtable	Via Zoom
10/06/2020	MDA, RDA JO Central West Region 10 Collaborative Meeting	Via Zoom
11/06/2020	Region 11 AGM	Via Zoom

3. Meetings

E Bradbury and D Thurley met with Federal Water Minister the Hon Keith Pitt. The meeting Provided a detailed introduction of the MDA.

Emma commended the findings and recommendations of the *Inquiry into the management of Murray–Darling Basin water resources* by The Interim Inspector-General to the Minister, and Invited the Minister to work closely with the MDA and our councils and communities to look beyond the current Basin Plan and ensure robust preparations for the next iteration.

4. General Wrap Up

Wagga City Council this month sought to terminate the appointment of their delegate after the delegate made inflammatory and inaccurate comments about the MDA and it was found that he had not attended an MDA meeting for almost 3 years. Council replaced the delegate stating that

it was important that their council was effectively represented and was getting value for their membership.

National President and CEO were invited by the Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation (RAMJO) to review their Water Security Position statement prior to its release. RAMJO councils have done an excellent job in creating alignment and a clear, articulate, and informed position on key issues in a highly contentious community – home of such groups as Can the Plan, Southern Riverina Irrigators and Speak-Up Campaign. I look forward to this regional position paper being released for consideration and comment by the full board of the MDA.

Murray-Darling Roundtable

As previously reported the Murray Darling Association will host the first in a series of Murray-Darling Basin Roundtable events, initiated by the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists. Hosted by the Murray-Darling Association, this iterative event is by invitation-only and will bring together key stakeholders to address immediate and long term challenges of water security and river health in the Basin.

The preliminary webinar was held on Wednesday 10th of June.

The Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists describes the event as an opportunity for communities, businesses, and scientists to come together to address these challenges and opportunities.

There are many actions which we believe we might all support that could have widespread benefits. The Roundtable will lay the foundation for a constructive path forward on water reform in the Murray-Darling Basin.

The aim of this roundtable to bring together representatives from across the Basin to work through opportunities for moving forward with water reform which will ensure long term river system health and enhance water security across the Murray-Darling Basin. We seek to:

- 1. Reaffirm commitments for a healthy river system with resilient communities, including first nations, and, a prosperous economy in the long term.*
- 2. Agree on constructive actions to progress water reform which may also be supported by regional communities, businesses, and governments; and*
- 3. Identify important issues that need to be addressed in the future.*

The webinar we lively and constructive with key themes of collaboration, cooperation and opportunity, and an appetite to continue the conversation emerging from the group.

5. Basin Community Leadership Program

The integral Water literacy component for the learning platform has now been approved and has been integrated within the GO1 Platform.

Final tweaks and content Q&A have been undertaken this month for final sign off by the board, we anticipate that the Board will receive the “learning platform” for their consideration and feedback prior to the July 2020 board meeting.

Logistical works have commenced to secure and market the dates for delivery of workshops in Merbein, Red Cliffs and Colignan.

Mildura Rural Council have been instrumental in guiding the organisation as to the best method for delivery. Therefore, in collaboration with MRC, the Merbein, Red Cliffs and Colignan workshops will be delivered jointly in Mildura on the 27th & 28th August 2020.

The MDA will be partnering with the Peter Cullen Trust in the delivery component of the program. See Briefing report attached.

6. Operational Update

The MDA's 2024 Strategic Plan implementation of content and matrix indicators has been high on the priority list this month, several high level meetings have been held with a draft plan due to be provided to the Board for their consideration prior to the July 2020 board meeting.

Emma Bradbury

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emma Bradbury', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chief Executive Officer