



MDA Delegates Report

November 2021

The Murray Darling Association (MDA) is Australia's peak body representing local government across the Murray-Darling Basin.

The following report should be tabled at council and provides delegates and their councils with an overview of MDA activities and engagements.



A note from the Murray Darling Association National President:

Following a 5-month talent search, the Murray Darling Association is delighted to announce the appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer for the Murray-Darling peak body, marking an exciting new chapter.

The appointment brings with it a focus on membership proposition, leading polling reform and a continuation of the MDA's solid work in delivering programs, projects, and providing a reliable base to represent local government and Basin communities.

With ever developing progress towards the MDA's Strategic Plan – Vision 2025, and the upcoming 2022 National Conference & AGM in Albury, it is pleasing to present the November 2021 issue of the Delegate's Report.

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1. New CEO to lead the Murray-Darling Peak Body

The Murray Darling Association (MDA) is delighted to announce the appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer for the Murray-Darling peak body, Mr Mark Lamb.

The appointment of Mr Lamb, signals an exciting new chapter for the MDA, bringing with it a focus on membership proposition, leading polling reform, and a continuation of the MDA's solid work in delivering programs, projects, and providing a reliable base to represent local government and Basin communities.

The MDA Board looks forward to working collaboratively with Mark, and to greatly increase our achievements in the coming years for the benefit of the Murray-Darling Basin communities.

Mark Lamb is slated to take on the role after the current CEO Emma Bradbury finishes in December.



Mark has managed several peak bodies and brings a wealth of both domestic and international experience to the role.

2. Submissions & Inquiries

1.1 Draft Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan

On 1 November 2021 the Murray Darling Association provided a submission to the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment consultation on a draft Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan.

The MDA put forth recommendations on unchecked damage to the environment, feral horse reduction and confinement, introduction of a control plan and investment in the ecosystem, as well as compliance and operational and strategic alignment.

The MDA submission to the Draft Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan is available for viewing on the [MDA website](#).



1.2 MDA Pre-Budget Submission

In September 2021 the Murray Darling Association provided a pre-budget submission to the Australian Government Treasury.

Through the submission, the MDA seeks the necessary funds to support, and collaborate with Basin governments in the implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, and the development of agreed water sharing arrangements beyond 2024.

The MDA's Pre-Budget Submission is available for viewing on the MDA website.



3. Key Meetings & Events

The below table summarises the association’s key engagements with the Basin communities.

Date	Event/Meeting	Location
7/10/21	DPIE Catchup & Review – Reconnecting River Country Program	Held Virtually
11/10/21	Beau Hug (Director), Fiona Martin (Assistant Director) Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment - Discuss individual feedback for the Murray-Darling Basic Economic Development Program (Round 3)	Held Virtually
12/10/21	Deanne Armstrong – C4EM	Echuca
13/10/21-14/10/21	Region 6 Annual Stakeholder Symposium	Rural City of Murray Bridge
15/10/21	Nicole Emará – CSIRO	Held Virtually
15/10/21	SQNSW – Drought Resilience Hub Partner/Member workshop	Held Virtually
18/10/21	Families and Communities Strong and Resilient Communities (SARC) Activity – Inclusive Communities Grants	Held Virtually
19/10/21	Hilton Taylor - A message to peak groups on behalf of the CEWH [SEC=OFFICIAL]	Held Virtually
20/10/21	DPIE Water engagement roundup (webinar)	Held Virtually
27/10/21	MDA/CSIRO – Science and Education Advisory Committee	Held Virtually
9/11/21	One Basin CRC – All Partner Meeting	Held Virtually
15/11/21	SA Interregional meeting planning discussion	Held Virtually
15/11/21	MDA briefing - Nick McBride (Member for Mackillop)	Held Virtually
22/11/21	Hon Mark Coulton MP	Held Virtually
24/11/21	The Hon Melinda Pavey MP – NSW Minister for Water	Held Virtually
24/11/21	The NWGA Advisory Body meeting	Held Virtually

4. IN REVIEW: Region 6 Annual Stakeholder Symposium



Day one

Panel sessions saw brilliant conversations focussing on sustainability, salt levels and infrastructure, as well as touching on the National Carp Control Plan.



Professor Michael Young enthalls guests at the Symposium Dinner – Photo provided by Vern Leng



Participants learning about the barrage system at Goolwa – Photo provided by Vern Leng

Day two

The networking and fun continued with a field trip circumnavigating the Lower Lakes & across the Barrages, visiting Langhorne Creek, Goolwa, the Murray Mouth, Hindmarsh & Mundoo island, and the Coorong.

Want to know more? [Footage from the symposium](#) will be available soon!



5. Working towards Vision 2025

Vision 2025 is the Murray Darling Association’s five-year Strategic Plan. It sets out the association’s goals and describes the strategies we will implement to achieve them.

Vision 2025 is built upon the foundations established by the 2016-19 Strategic Plan, and confirms our place as the Basin’s primary driver in local leadership and policy development.

To view the current Strategic Plan, visit the [MDA website](#), or contact the office on [\(03\) 5480 3805](tel:0354803805)

Goal	How	Reference
Local Leadership/Leadership and Engagement	Meeting with the National Water Grid Authority NWGA 24/11/21.	The NWGA is playing a leading role in developing Australia’s National Water Grid – the next generation of water infrastructure.
	MDA Pre-Budget Submission to Australian Government Treasury, September 2021. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MDA seeks to continue to collaborate with Basin governments in implementing the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, and the development of agreed water sharing arrangements beyond 2024. 	[See Outgoing Correspondence, MDA Board Meeting 412 Minutes]
Science & Education	Progress towards establishing the Virtual Centre of Excellence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing a virtual space for local government and stakeholders across the Basin to collaborate and innovate. 	SAC_Minutes_0012 4.4.2 , The Strategic Advisory Committee met virtually on 22/09/21.
Inform better government policy	Submission to the Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan – Region 1	MDA_Submission Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan
Exchange information & facilitate informed debate	Region 6 Annual Stakeholder Symposium <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitated debate through panel sessions, Q&A, and a study tour of the Lower Lakes and the Barrages. The MDA is continuing to cultivate its strategic relationships with the Basin LGAs, allowing for a more informed and interconnected decision and policy making process 	Region 6 Annual Stakeholder Symposium <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Region 6 Annual Stakeholder Symposium
Engagement in policy process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Letters sent to Government and tourism bodies in support of Recreational Water. Letters sent to Federal & State Governments to commend exploring alternate means to exploit the carp as a resource that could benefit Basin communities. 	[See Outgoing Correspondence, MDA Board Meeting 412 Minutes]

6. MDA Board Meeting and the Committee of Regional Chairs

The Murray Darling Association held its *Committee of Regional Chairs* meeting on 27 September 2021, with the MDA Board convening on 18 October 2021. The committee and MDA Board meet bi-monthly for the purpose of knowledge sharing, regional development, and inter-regional collaboration. The MDA Board is scheduled to reconvene on 6 December 2021, with the next meeting of the Committee of Regional Chairs yet to be confirmed.

The MDA makes all board meeting [Minutes](#) available on the MDA website.



7. Region Meetings

Our 12 regions meet quarterly. Each meeting is an incredible opportunity to collaborate with councils in your region and hear from fantastic guest speakers. To find out when your next region meeting is, please contact your chair or our office on (03) 5480 3805.

To find out more about what is happening in other MDA regions, please head over to www.mda.asn.au, where all region meeting minutes are available.

8. National Conference

1.1 78th National Conference Economics, Dams, and Infrastructure

The 78th National Conference & AGM will be held in **Albury, 19-21 September 2022** at the **Albury Entertainment Centre**.



In a year where much has been disrupted and affected by COVID-19, it comes as no surprise that the towns, regions, and countries to emerge quickest and strongest are those with innovative, connected local leadership.

This can be said doubly so for local government and the communities of the Murray Darling Basin. Basin councils have, after all, spent years building connections, infrastructure and resilient economies across catchments and communities.

A resilient economy, and infrastructure to support it, is essential to our people. In the same way, a healthy river system must have a balance of flow and harvest. **There is no future on a dry system.**

The MDA's 78th National Conference & AGM is your opportunity to be part of the solution – to join the conversation, to inform future policy, and to engage with the innovators, scientists, educators, and leaders of our time.

[Join us in Albury](#), home to the winding Murray River and its waterways; where local, technical, and political leaders will come together to tackle the big issues of the Basin and forge a future for councils, catchments, and communities.



9. Final word from the CEO

It is with tremendous excitement, gratitude, and optimism for the future of the Murray Darling Association that I pen this, my last report as CEO of this remarkable organisation.

With all the indulgence of reflection, there will be plenty of 'I's in the following lines as I reflect on and where we have come in the almost 8 years I have been in the role, and the opportunities ahead as I vacate the space,

In that time, we have seen the Basin community travel the often-painful course from storm to norm, and now well into the deep reforms of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. We have seen communities react to changing water availability and recognise that drought, climate change, agricultural practices, floods, technologies all contribute to the challenging but necessary balance of equitable water sharing, not just in the Basin but across Australia. We have also seen local government and the MDA lead the way in building consensus by sharing knowledge to understand the experience of communities beyond their own.



Our Plan – Our Future 2017 National Conference & AGM in Renmark.



A lighter moment with Mayor Phil – Ocker- O'Connor.

I am proud of my part in the role the MDA has played in making local leadership a national priority; in developing trust, unity, equity, and growth; increasing collaboration, connecting catchments and communities; recognising that our Plan is our future enabling us to regenerate a healthy, working Basin.

If these laudable achievements sound familiar, it is because these are the themes that have set the agenda for a national conversation through successive MDA National Conferences. Now recognised as a seminal event on the local government and water sector calendar, the MDA's national conference and AGMs have been a highlight of my time in the role, but one that I will happily hand on to my successor.

And that brings me to my final, and more forward-looking reflections. Few CEO's have the privilege of handing their legacy on to a more capable and experienced team than I have in the current Board and our incoming CEO, Mark Lamb. Under their collective leadership I have every confidence that the MDA will continue to prosecute the case for local government to be afforded a role in the national decision making framework as we implement further reforms, to elevate local issues to the regional and the national agenda, and to serve the needs of our members and stakeholders well into the future.



Basin Communities Leadership Program in Cunnamulla, 2021.

My final word is, of course to acknowledge the wonderful experience I have had in working with our amazing members and stakeholders; with this Board who manage time and again to carve consensus from chaos; with our amazing Treasurer Peter George who has wrangled efficiencies and transparency that are the envy of any in the sector; with my dream-team of staff who have consistently delivered beyond all expectations; and most particularly with David Thurley, National President since 2015.



Working for and with David has been a joy and an honour. His unwavering support and professionalism, his wit and intellect, and his quiet but steely leadership have so often smoothed the seemingly insurmountable to clear a path to a better way. And I thank David (and Sue!) for all their incredible work, their friendship and great good humour.

I am beyond grateful for my time at the MDA. I leave the job knowing our collective efforts have made a difference and that momentum is gathering! Local leadership - it's a national priority.



With apologies to Abbey Road, after my first, our 70th National Conference at Tumut, 2014.

