



Chief Executive Officer's Report

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Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Membership	2
3. Advocacy	3
4. Partnerships, collaboration, and engagement	3
5. CSIRO and the Circular Economy	3
6. Key Meetings and Engagements	4
7. 79th National Conference and AGM	4
8. Engagement Report on the benefits of membership:	5

1. Introduction

In addition to ‘business as usual’ issues, we have been focusing on key deliverables, including:

- Membership
- Executing, reporting, and finalising CSIRO ‘Circular Economy’ projects
- Preparing, organising, and delivering MDA conference and AGM
- Working on financials
- Following up on previous motions and preparing motions for the AGM
- Advocacy

2. Membership

We are continuing to drive membership wherever possible and will be conducting a membership campaign to non-members. We try to meet with non-members whenever the opportunity allows. In May, we had a meeting with Tea Tree Gully in Region 7 and the feedback was very positive with an indication from the Mayor and CEO that their council would re-join. We also received similar feedback from several Queensland Councils after the Murray Darling Association’s attendance, and presentation, to the Council of Mayors meeting.

In response to a request by MDA Members to renew their membership prior to the end of financial year, and in recognition that Members are currently working to finalise their budgets for the year ahead, this invoice will not be due for payment until 31 July 2023.

3. Advocacy

We have continued to connect with related parties in the water space, both Federally and State based. Of particular note, the Water Minister, Tanya Plibersek, spoke at our conference and there has been ongoing communication following. We have had follow up calls and had very good discussions about many subjects, including MinCo and recurrent funding for the MDA as well as water buybacks. The Minister very much enjoyed being at the MDA conference and enjoyed meeting many of our members from across the basin. She indicated that her door is open to us and looks forward to further engagement such as through the Water Reform Taskforce and MinCo.

We received much media attention following the conference. This is continuing, so we will try to capitalise where appropriate. A number of speaking opportunities have ensued such as the Water Symposium and the SW Qld Council of Mayors.

We are continuing to develop relationships with State Ministers, as well as relevant bodies, and we are currently seeking face to face meetings.

4. Partnerships, collaboration, and engagement

We are continuing to work on a range of partnerships such as CSIRO, SQNNSW and One Basin CRC.

Whilst the CSIRO relationship has already provided outcomes, other partnerships are a slower burn. However, feedback has been very positive in terms of the potential of these relationships.

5. CSIRO and the Circular Economy

CSIRO Land and Water has partnered with MDA to investigate and explore a series of strategic growth areas that align with the biggest land and water challenges faced by Australian governments/agencies, industries and communities. These growth areas will build on capabilities and that of our partners and transform the boundaries of the types of products, research projects and services we might collaborate on.

They have identified Repurposing Waste / Circular Economy as a strategic growth area and we are interested in validating this with LGA's as a valued partner. We would like to understand more about how LGA's work within the repurposing waste / circular economy area within their organisation.

“The MDA had achieved in 3 months what would have taken CSIRO years.”

They are also keen to hear about any future aspirations they might have in regard to infrastructure solutions they need now and into the future. To capture these insights. We completed a series of meetings in May and June that will help inform the future of this growth area and ensure they can design solutions that are of value for all.

Having successfully completed all requirement and presented to the management of CSIRO, they indicated that they were very pleased with our work, stating that “the MDA had achieved in 3 months what would have taken CSIRO years.” We have developed good working relationships with most of their departments – in particular, the Land and Water

Division. Given the interest around managed aquifer recharge, there is potential to partner with CSIRO again re this area of work.

We have engaged with CSIRO on a further project, which is an extension of the previous Circular Economy work. There is the potential to conduct further work with CSIRO departments which we are continuing to explore.

In addition to the above projects, we are providing consultancy to an organisation that is working in the Circular Economy.

6. Key Meetings and Engagements

Date	Event/meeting	Location
13/4/23	April Peak Groups Briefing 2023	Held Virtually
17/4/23	Meeting with Richard Sargood – MRAG	Albury, NSW
21/4/23	Meeting with Richard Sargood – MRAG	Albury, NSW
27/4/23	Meeting with the CSIRO: Circular Economy Workshops	Held Virtually
9/5/23	Meeting with PSTR Group	Albury, NSW
9/5/23	Meeting with the office of Hon Tanya Plibersek MP to discuss the Budget, and key water related outcomes.	Telephone
11/5/23	Meeting with the City of Tea Tree Gully	City of Tea Tree Gully, SA
16/5/23	One Basin CRC Partner Briefing	Held Virtually
18/5/23	Joint Region 1 and 2 Meeting	Corowa, NSW
22/5/23	Follow-up Meeting: ANU Next Gen Basin Group	Held Virtually
31/5/23	Meeting with Hon Kristy McBain MP	Canberra, ACT

7. 79th National Conference and AGM

The feedback from our National conference has been very positive. We were able to secure the key speakers we wanted as well as relevant sponsors. The number of delegates was reasonable, although could have been higher. Overall, we were very pleased with the result. In addition, we made a positive contribution to our financial position.

Looking forward, I am pleased to officially launch the webpage and invite you to the [Murray Darling Association's 79th National Conference and AGM](#) to be held **25 – 28 September, 2023** in **The Rural City of Murray Bridge, SA**.

This year's theme is "Partnership through collaboration across the Basin."

This exciting event will bring together leaders and decision makers from across the Murray-Darling Basin, and will be a wonderful opportunity to meet again, face to face.

Ticketing is already up and running, with **Early Bird Tickets available now!**

We are planning to hold the welcome reception at the Murray Bridge Rowing Club on Monday, 25th September. On Tuesday (26th) we will be conducting the study tour to the lower Murray, Coorong and across the barrages. Wednesday and Thursday (27th & 28th) the conference will be conducted in the Murray Bridge Town Hall. On Wednesday evening, (27th) the Gala dinner will be held at the Bridgeport Hotel, across the road from the Town Hall.

Murray Bridge is a bustling rural town sitting in prime position on the banks of the Murray River. Less than an hour from Adelaide, wind back the clock to river time and kick back on a leisurely houseboat or float away to a world of relaxation on The Cube. Amp up the pace and hit the river wakeboarding, water skiing, swimming or fishing or go on an African safari and get up close and personal with lions, giraffes and rhinoceros at Monarto Safari Park. Come nightfall, look to the skies; with low rainfall, clear skies and virtually no light pollution, the outskirts of Murray Bridge are one of the best spots to explore the cosmos in South Australia.

Recognising the importance, and influence, of Local Government, Businesses, and that of community leaders and representatives, the Murray Darling Association invites you to consider attendance to the 79th National Conference, to **collaborate, and be a part of the Basin's water solution** – to join the conversation, inform future policy, and to engage with the scientists, educators, and leaders of our time.

Join the conversation! Join us and engage with local, technical, and political leaders to forge a future for councils, catchments, and communities.

Inform future policy! Engage with the innovators, scientists, educators, and leaders of our time to tackle the big issues of the Basin.

Engage and network! Engage with peers and experts over dinner and discuss technical issues with industry and department heads at our Conference exhibition booths.

The program for presenters and guest speakers is well underway and the Planning committee are working on all logistical matters to secure a whole Albury tourist experience.

We are also delighted to introduce our PLATINUM and GALA DINNER sponsor, Public Safety Training and Response Group, the preeminent Public Safety Training and Response Group covering all aspects of public safety. This includes disaster preparedness, emergency response, management and all other associated areas that give the community, the first responders, military, and the government the knowledge and resources to respond to incidents in a timely and efficient manner.

To find out more about the Murray Darling Association, go to www.mda.asn.au or follow us on social media.

Collaborate, and be a part of the Basin's water solution! Register Now!

Find out more, and to register, go to www.mda.asn.au/events/2023natcon.

8. Engagement Report on the benefits of membership:

We are embarking on a membership drive, in order to try to secure new members as well as retain our current membership. In particular, we want to ensure that the Northern Basin is engaged. We are pleased to update the Board with the news that Tamworth Council has just joined and we are trying to arrange meetings with them accordingly.

With over 167 councils in the MDB, the ongoing partnership between Councils and the Murray Darling Association elevates local and regional issues and priorities to the state and federal level providing national recognition of local priorities.

Membership to the MDA delivers social, economic, and environmental benefits to each community by creating partnerships, participating in events, and accessing networks and services that align with and support all Community plans, in the areas of Community, Environment, Economy and Council.

We know that councils and the local government sector are increasingly resource challenged and are looking for services, relationships and partnerships that assist in achieving your council's and your region's strategic priorities.

Water, land management, energy and community wellbeing are front and centre of almost every council's priorities. A strong relationship between council and the MDA provides opportunities to

- partner with councils and regional groups in providing local case studies and experience to support regional and national positions and advocacy strategies.
- raise the profile of your council and the local government sector through MDA's partnerships with the Commonwealth.
- present strategically aligned priorities, objectives, and advocacy to state and federal governments.
- leverage regional efficiencies and Basin-scale capability and positions.

Benefits to your community.

The MDA fosters a culture of community collaboration and leadership development to improve social, cultural, environmental, and economic well-being across the Murray-Darling Basin.

Working together with member councils and our regions, we achieve policy change and ensure local knowledge informs the national dialogue on water reform, land management, environmental sustainability, leadership development and education, and regional economic diversification.

Council's participation at MDA region and national meetings builds regional relationships and elevates the community's priorities to the state and federal level, informing decisions and outcomes that impact your local area.

Benefits to your environment.

There is no future on a dry riverbed. At the core of our vision is a strong emphasis on science and education to inform policies for the sustainable management of Basin resources to ensure a healthy and prosperous future.

The MDA's vision, which drives our strategic and operational direction, is for *local government and communities to work together to achieve a healthy, vibrant and thriving Murray-Darling Basin*. As a result, the MDA has:

- Partnered with CSIRO with a focus on science and education to address some of the Basin's toughest challenges.
- Advocated for and represented local government in environmental issues, including floodplain harvesting etc.
- Partnered with Murray-Darling Basin Authority, better supporting local government through information sharing and representation.
- Supported regions to develop Climate Ready Communities statements

Benefits to your economy.

For many, if not all, Basin communities, water security plays an important role in economic growth and sustainability. Through the MDA's regional alignments and partnerships, member councils leverage the value of knowledge sharing across the local government and regional development sectors to pursue water quality, water security and other priorities.

The MDA provides member councils with partnerships that support regional economic development and diversification initiatives.

Benefits to your council.

Our mission is to provide high value services to our members, and their communities by delivering quality projects, events and products create enduring value for Basin communities and governments.

Our achievements

The Murray Darling Association has been successful in shifting policies to better reflect the needs of the Basin communities, and we are continuing to grow our reach and impact as portrayed in our [Vision 2025 Strategic Plan](#).

The relationship between the MDA and our member Councils contributes strongly to the development of the local government sector as a whole and our collective role in ensuring a vibrant, sustainable future for the Murray-Darling Basin.

Mark D. Lamb

Chief Executive Officer