



# Murray Darling Association Inc.

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**Ordinary Meeting of the Board**  
**Monday 16 December 2019**  
<https://zoom.us/j/288154618>  
Via Zoom Calendar

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## MINUTES - MEETING No. 393

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Meeting declared open at 10.32am

### 1. ATTENDANCE

#### 1.1 Present

Cr David Thurley	Albury City Council	Region 1
Cr Dennis Patterson	City of Greater Shepparton	Region 2
Cr Jane MacAllister	Wentworth Shire Council	Region 4
Cr Peter Hunter	Renmark Paringa Council	Region 5
Cr Melissa Rebbeck	Alexandrina Council	Region 6
Cr Brian Lockyer	Barunga West Council	Region 8
Cr John Campbell	Gunnedah Council	Region 11
Cr Richard Marsh	Balonne Shire Council	Region 12
Cr Paul Maytom	Leeton Shire Council	Region 9
Pete George	M&S Group	Treasurer
Emma Bradbury	MDA	CEO
Tony Banks	MDA	XO

#### 1.2 Apologies:

Cr Phyllis Miller	Forbes Shire Council	Region 10
Cr Andrew Tilley	City of Mitcham	Region 7

**Motion:** That the apologies be accepted and noted.

J Campbell/ B Lockyer

Carried

#### 1.3 Declarations

### 2. PREVIOUS MINUTES

2.1 [Meeting 392](#) held via Zoom Calendar 25 November 2019

**Motion:** That the minutes of board meeting 392 are approved as an accurate record of that meeting.

J MacAllister / P Hunter

Carried

### 3. REPORTS

3.1 Chairman's report

D Thurley provided a brief report to the board, including notification of his re-election as chair of Region 1 at the recent Annual General Meeting.

Additionally, D Thurley discussed his attendance at the peak bodies briefing in Canberra in November, which was followed by major departmental changes.

D Thurley also noted that the operator of West Corugan irrigation scheme spoke at the recent Region 1 meeting. This is a scheme that has 560 kilometres of open channel. D Thurley noted that recovery of water is important in this scheme, due to the significance amount of losses. Following on from Board Meeting 392, D Thurley advised the board that this issue was further raised with Minister Pavey, NSW Water Minister, by MDA CEO E Bradbury and J Campbell.

D Thurley reported that the Wentworth group of scientists is very keen to enlist the MDA's support in running a series of discussions and seminars around various parts of the Basin.

In light of other recent events, D Thurley believes that people are now realising what the MDA can do and deliver, and they want to talk with us, and through us, to people in the community.

### 3.2 [Finance Report:](#)

P George provided a comprehensive finance report. P George discussed that with the profit and loss report, the MDA has the ability to track categories. The Basin Community Leadership program is now a category to track the income as we have received, and costs.

P Hunter asked for clarification regarding "unassigned" entries.

P George and E Bradbury provided background regarding MDA's use of Xero and reinstatement of those categories, which the MDA exec will go back and reallocate.

D Patterson asked for further information regarding the MDA's need to pay payroll tax due to recent growth in staff.

P George clarified that the MDA will not need to pay for payroll tax with recent growth in staff.

J MacAllister asked for further information regarding the variation in monthly income.

P George noted that the Basin Community Leadership funding and memberships have affected the monthly average figures.

**Motion:** That the finance reports are noted.

P George/ P Hunter

Carried

### 3.3 [Chief Executive Officers report](#)

In addition to the attached Chief Executive Officer's report, E Bradbury provided the following additional information.

#### **Projects**

*The MDA is starting to trade in a space where projects are an active part of what we do. There's a couple of key funding opportunities available for us at the moment. The MDA recently put up a project proposal for micro grids, which was a substantial proposal. I don't anticipate it is likely to get up for a number of reasons but it was a valuable exercise. Additionally, current grant opportunities include Building Better Regions Round 4 and Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program project round 2, which we are currently preparing submissions for. We have been calling in additional resources to chasing up those projects. It is important for board*

members to be providing me with as much feedback and direction as you think is relevant to identify initiatives and opportunities, and also to contain us if you feel we are driving away from core business.

### **Strategic plan**

*In our strategic planning workshop in February, there was a lot of really rich content about the MDA. As a result, I've put together draft notes together for a new strategic plan. 2019 was a year of transition and to try to write a strategic plan while we were lacking a clear direction of where we were heading was always going to be difficult and potentially head us in the wrong direction. As of about two months ago, we became clear on where we are going and where we want to go. The only constraint in getting the strategic plan out to you is our time constraints. The strategic planning workshop that we are planning for early 2020 will be lighter and half day or a day.*

### **Consultation:**

*We have started consultation around the name change. As we are in a rapidly evolving space, it is important to note that we have recently had a lot of feedback and input from the science sector and community, the academic sector and community, and the broader LGC community, y looking to rely on the identity we've established. The question that many board members have posed is whether or not changing the name to include LG is a risk or an opportunity is becoming clearer to me. This brings me to the point that if we get our processes right, then the right outcome will follow. We will be making a detailed approach to this consultation, first with the board, and then with the broader community as to how we consult on this potential move.*

M Rebbeck asked for more information regarding the request by Minister Pavey for the MDA to facilitate meetings and visits to the barrages and the lower lakes in South Australia.

Extensive discussion followed regarding the MDA's role in facilitating visits to South Australia, and several motions were proposed.

E Bradbury noted that, following discussions with D Thurley, MDA's first priority should be on education and facilitation, and any further action would include engaging with Minister Spears more directly.

M Rebbeck requested the MDA to advise Region 6 as soon as this was known, in order to go through the correct council processes to arrange visits.

J MacAllister suggested that the MDA wait until after the Ministerial Council meeting, which will be held on 17 December 2019, until the MDA exec and board take further action.

J MacAllister also suggested that each region should provide MDA exec with information about their region and issues of significance, so that the MDA can develop a series of fact sheets about each region that can easily be disseminated.

D Patterson voiced a concern regarding conflicts if Victorian Minister for Water Lisa Neville was also not invited to the meeting. D Patterson also proposed that the motion should be more general, and refer to Ministers more generally.

Motion: That the MDA offer support to all Ministers to facilitate interstate collaboration and effective Basin issues discussion at the community level.

P Hunter / D Patterson

Carried

## 3.4 [Region reports](#)

### **Region 6**

Cr Melissa Rebbeck: *Region 6 has received many media requests around the claims made by NSW government and the barrages. In response, we have been quoting the facts from MDBA. There have been a few media releases from our council around that. Additionally, I'll be moving a climate emergency declaration through our council and we'll be talking about the Murray-Darling Basin as part of that. I would encourage you as a board and including your councils think about this as a motion for your own councils and regions.*

#### **Region 4**

Cr Jane MacAllister: *We've had the first meeting that Wentworth Shire have been allowed to sit on with the critical advisory panel, noting that in the Northern basin, councils have been sitting on them for some time. There is still a lot to get my head around, but there are a few changes that NSW agencies are proposing. Last week, we also had a meeting in Menindee with the SDL adjustment mechanism stakeholder advisory group, which has nominated a chair and provided terms of reference. Background information of note was the lack of consideration of aboriginal stakeholder input. I was fortunate to be invited along with a busload of recreational fishers and CHEW local engagement officer to look at Menindee at the main weir at Menindee on aboriginal land with 500-year-old trees – what a remarkable place. We also noted that the lakes themselves have become disconnected for the first time in everyone's memory. Things are now considerably dire around the lakes. It looks like the whole of Menindee lakes will be drying up over the next few months. While we were there, we did see some fish in distress, but we haven't had reports of kills. We are all looking towards another grim season. Other things happening in Region 4 is red alert for blue green algae in Wentworth – we're still not sure how that's going to impact the Wentworth to Broken Hill pipeline, and therefore the water resource for Broken Hill but it's created some tourism tension. We're not very happy campers at this time of the year in Region 4.*

**Motion:** That the reports are noted.

D Thurley/ B Lockyer

Carried

#### **4. CORRESPONDENCE**

- 4.1 MDA name change [ALGA](#)
- 4.2 MDA name change [LGAQ](#)
- 4.3 MDA name change [LGASA](#)
- 4.4 MDA name change [LGNSW](#)
- 4.5 MDA name change [MAV](#)
- 4.6 Goondiwindi Council – Incoming [a\)](#) and [b\)](#) - [Outgoing](#)

E Bradbury provided a brief summary of correspondence from the past month.

E Bradbury noted that Correspondence 4.6 was related to advocacy for motion 5.20, stating that, "Goondiwindi Regional Council is doing some significant follow up work in promoting the merits of revised Coffey scheme so they have reached out to the MDA for support in doing that."

**Motion:** That the correspondences are noted by the Board

D Thurley / J Campbell

Carried

#### **5. BUSINESS ARISING**

- 5.1 [MDA Matters in Progress arising from previous Meetings](#)

**Motion:** Board noted the motions arising and actions completed from the previous board meeting.

B Lockyer / M Rebbeck

Carried

#### 5.2 Region 8

Cr Brian Lockyer – Barunga West Council duly elected to the position of Regional Chair, Friday 29<sup>th</sup>

November 2019. Congratulations and warm welcome.

**Motion:** That the board

- a) acknowledge the appointment and welcome Cr Lockyer as Chair of Region 8, and
- b) thank Mayor Denis Clark for his time and dedication to Region 8 and the MDA.

J MacAllister / P Hunter

Carried

## 6. GENERAL BUSINESS

### 6.1 Briefing Paper – [SA Desalination](#)

B Lockyer expressed concern regarding the cost of the SA desalination plant in comparison to the limited use of the plant.

B Lockyer suggested that the MDA make inquiries to the SA government, particularly to consider running a pipeline from the desalination plant to reservoirs to alleviate some dependence on the Murray Darling-Basin system.

E Bradbury suggested that the MDA conduct an inquiry and produce a briefing paper on the benefits of pursuing further inquiry externally.

J MacAllister agreed and suggested that more investigation on ownership of the desalination plant is necessary.

**ACTION:** The MDA executive investigate this issue further and provide a further briefing paper for the board.

### 6.2 Briefing Paper – [Waterpool Water Summit](#)

E Bradbury noted that this was a well-attended and facilitated meeting.

J MacAllister noted that the briefing reports look very professional, in particular the report by T Banks that was embedded within the CEO's report.

J MacAllister emphasised that this is excellent reporting, and she really appreciates the level of detail that is coming out of it as well, thanks to the staff.

### 6.3 Briefing Paper – [Northern Basin Commissioner Report](#)

D Thurley noted that the recent Northern Basin Commissioner (NBC) report has highlighted some of the most important issues in the Basin, which could go towards fixing critical governance issues.

J MacAllister agreed with D Thurley, and also noted that the report reflected previous MDA motions and submissions.

E Bradbury agreed, and noted the recommendation, if approved by the board, that the MDA support the report and emphasise our continued commitment to work with all agencies. The recommendations are as follows:

**Motion** That the board note the report and

- a) develop, approve and release a statement commending the findings of the report, emphasising our continued commitment to partner with all agencies to restore confidence and optimise

- outcomes for our rural and regional communities; and
- b) note the alignment between the [Northern Basin Commissioner Report](#)'s report and recommendations, and the MDA's Submission and Recommendations contained in the MDA [Submission to the Senate Select Committee in September 2016](#).
  - c) and investigate organisational capacity and relevant funding opportunities to develop a Murray Darling Basin information and news app, consistent with the NBR recommendations, and with the MDA's Recommendation 4 in the MDA Submission to the Senate Select Committee in September 2016.
  - d) Actively develop greater collaboration and consultation with First Nation groups across the Murray Darling Basin.

J MacAllister / M Rebbeck

Carried

#### 6.4 Briefing Paper – Recent Media Attention MDB Water Mngt

T Banks provided a brief summary of the report, and its intention to keep the board up to date in this very fluid space.

Extensive conversation followed regarding the report's recommendations.

J MacAllister said with Ministerial Council happening tomorrow (17 December 2019), statements may not come until after the meeting. J MacAllister also suggested that some of these issues may be supported with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority appointing a chair.

D Thurley also expressed concern regarding the absence of a Murray-Darling Basin Authority chair.

6.4.1 E Bradbury suggested moving a motion to express some significant concern about the absence of a chair of the MDBA.

**Motion:** That the MDA write to the MDBA and Basin Ministers expressing significant concern about the absence of a chair of the MDBA

J MacAllister / D Patterson

Carried

*P Maytom arrived at meeting at 11.45am*

6.4.2 E Bradbury provided further information regarding recommendation 4 and suggested that the board have a discussion around the MDA's position on the government's decision to move environment into the water and agriculture portfolio.

J MacAllister raised the NBC's comments regarding governance and the Department of Agriculture.

Following a discussion, the board agreed on the following motion.

**Motion:** In light of the Northern Basin Commissioner's recent report, that the MDA express concern that the Department of Environment be merged with Department of Agriculture.

J MacAllister / P Hunter

Carried

**ACTION:** MDA exec to provide agreed talking points for Board members to; and ensure board members are mindful of the position of the MDA, and evolutions across the states.

**ACTION:** MDA exec to provide a briefing sheet to the board outlining the relationship, and highlighting

distinctions between the River Murray Water Agreement (1914), Murray-Darling Basin Agreement (1987) and the Murray-Darling Basin Plan (2012)

#### 6.5 Socio Economic Round table discussion – Region 4 – Swan Hill Council

D Thurley provided a brief summary of the report, noting that Swan Hill Rural City Council withdrew membership from the MDA due to its position supporting the 450GL up water recovery.

However, D Thurley emphasised that the MDA has always supported this conditional to no negative socio economic effects at all.

M Rebbeck noted that the socio-economic impacts to Basin communities are often discussed at Region 6 meetings, and that this is often difficult to balance with the environment.

D Patterson noted the impacts to environment and farmers in Region 2 and expressed sympathy for Swan Hill council.

J MacAllister noted that Swan Hill has a new Mayor, Bill Moore and that the council now also a councillor who is very active in water space, which may be beneficial in renewing conversations with Swan Hill Council.

D Patterson noted that Region 2 invited all Region 3 members and non-members to a recent region 2 meeting, to provide support and representation of their issues within Region 2.

E Bradbury notes that it is necessary to map out a strategy to engage in this region.

D Patterson agreed, and expressed the need for an offline discussion regarding strategy.

**ACTION:** CEO E Bradbury to facilitate meeting with relevant board members (J MacAllister, D Patterson and D Thurley) to continue discussion with Swan Hill and other councils to try to convince them that re-joining the MDA is in their best interests.

#### 6.6 Lock Zero

Continued advocacy for an investigation into the feasibility of Lock Zero merits.

**ACTION:** A briefing paper will be provided to the board to establish a foundation for further discussions, Region 6 to contribute.

### STRATEGY

J MacAllister noted that a significant amount of discussion at Board Meeting 393 revolved around Ministerial Council meetings. J MacAllister suggested that the MDA develops an ongoing strategy for Ministerial Council meeting, including writing to the federal minister following the meetings to urge that a communique be released as soon as possible.

### 7. CLOSE at 12.09pm