



Murray Darling Association Inc.

admin@mda.asn.au
www.mda.asn.au
T (03) 5480 3805
ABN: 64 636 490 493

250 Anstruther Street
P.O. Box 1268
Echuca, Vic 3564

Ordinary Meeting of the Board Meeting 398 Monday 18th May 2020

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86048592852?pwd=Q2E1T1lGWXcwclLdTN6bEEwbDA5dz09>

MINUTES - MEETING No. 398

1. ATTENDANCE

1.1. Present

Cr David Thurley	Albury City Council	Region 1
Cr Denis Patterson	City of Greater Shepparton	Region 2
Cr Jane MacAllister	Wentworth Shire Council	Region 4
Cr Peter Raison	Mid Murray Council	Region 5
Cr Andrew Tilley	City of Mitcham	Region 7
Cr Brian Lockyer	Barunga West Council	Region 8
Cr Paul Maytom	Leeton Shire Council	Region 9
Cr Phyllis Miller	Forbes Shire Council	Region 10
Cr John Campbell	Gunnedah Council	Region 11
Cr Samantha O'Toole	Balonne Shire Council	Region 12
Pete George	M&S Group	Treasurer
Emma Bradbury	MDA	CEO
Jessica Maher	MDA	Minute Taker

1.2. Apologies:

Cr Melissa Rebbeck Alexandrina Council Region 6

1.3. Declarations

J MacAllister declared her interest in Item 7.2.

2. PREVIOUS MINUTES

2.1. [Meeting 397](#) held via Zoom Calendar Monday 20th April 2020

Motion: That the minutes of board meeting 397 are approved as an accurate record of that meeting.

J Campbell / D Patterson

Carried

3. REPORTS

3.1. Chairman's report
D Thurley noted his attendance at the MDA's meeting with Minister Pitt.

3.2. [Finance Report:](#)

P George provided a summary of the finance reports.

“Legislation was passed to provide temporary cash flow support to small and medium businesses and not-for-profit organisations that employ staff and have been affected by the economic downturn associated with COVID-19 (novel coronavirus). Eligible businesses and not-for-profit (NFP) organisations receive between \$20,000 to \$100,000 in cash flow boost amounts by lodging their activity statements up to the month or quarter of September 2020.

The cash flow boosts, delivered as credits in the activity statement system, are equivalent to the amount withheld from wages paid to employees for each monthly or quarterly period from March to June 2020.

An additional cash flow boost will be applied when activity statements for each monthly or quarterly period from June to September 2020 are lodged. These credits are equal to the total boosts credited for March to June 2020. They will be paid out in either two or four instalments depending on your reporting cycle.

On 29th April, the MDA received a cash flow boost of \$37,836 via the ATO, with \$33,627 credited to the bank account being \$37,836 less March BAS \$4,209”

E Bradbury thanked P George for his proactive approach to the MDA financials and his assistance in applying for government support regarding COVID-19.

P Miller noted that councils are currently working on budgets and recommended that the MDA inform councils about upcoming membership invoices as soon as possible.

J Campbell suggested sending a copy of the delegate’s report out with the invoices.

E Bradbury agreed to both suggestions, noting that the MDA executive will send out membership invoices by end of May.

B Lockyer joined the meeting at 10.15am

3.3. [Chief Executive Officers report](#)

E Bradbury noted that May has been an incredibly busy month, as reflected in the CEO’s report.

E Bradbury also noted that significant alignments are starting to emerge out of long-term projects and the MDA is working towards including greater partnerships with regional groups of councils, providing an opportunity to commence the realignment of the MDA boundaries.

E Bradbury recommended that this matter be referred to the Strategic Advisory Group for their recommendation on progress.

ACTION: MDA Executive refer realignment of the MDA boundaries to the Strategic Advisory Group

E Bradbury noted the meeting with Minister Pitt, and discussed projects, information, and beyond 2024.

Motion: That the Finance and Chief Executive Officers report are noted.

P Miller / Paul Maytom

Carried

A Tilley joined meeting at 10.21am

3.4. [Region reports](#)

Region 1

Cr D Thurley noted that the Region 1 meeting has been postponed until 3rd week of June.

Region 2

Cr Dennis Patterson noted that Region 2 will be having their next meeting on 27 May.

Region 7

Cr A Tilley noted that Region 7 originally had a meeting scheduled for 27 May, which has been rescheduled until next month with the hope of having it face-to-face.

3.5. Communication and Briefing reports

- 3.5.1. [Lifeblood Alliance Briefing Paper](#)
- 3.5.2. [The Lower Lakes Independent Science Review](#)
- 3.5.3. Delegates Report

Motion: That the reports are noted.

J Campbell / B Lockyer

Carried

4. CORRESPONDENCE

4.1. Correspondences Out

- 4.1.1 [Queensland Local Government Mayoral Elections.](#)
Letters of Congratulations to all newly and re-elected Mayors in Queensland Basin footprint
- 4.1.2 City of Port Adelaide Enfield
Letter to City of Port Adelaide Enfield Council clarifying MDA Membership fee structure.
- 4.1.3 The Hon [Minister Pavey](#)
Invitation extended to The Hon. Melinda Pavey to meet with MDA's Region 10 Chair and Executives.

4.2 Correspondences In

- 4.2.1 [The Hon Michael McCormack MP](#)
Response from The Hon Michael McCormack regarding feasibility investigations into David Coffey's Clarence River Diversion Scheme and the New Bradfield Scheme.
- 4.2.2 [Queensland Local Government Mayoral Elections](#)
Response letters from Queensland May
- 4.2.3 [The Hon Melinda Pavey MP](#)
Response from the Hon Melinda Pavey regarding temporary water restrictions in the Northern Basin and the approval to take water for the purposes of floodplain harvesting.
- 4.2.4 [The Hon Keith Pitt](#)
Response from the Hon Keith Pitt on his appointment as Minister for Resources, Water And Northern Australia.

P Maytom asked for further information about the National Water Grid Authority and opportunities to receive updates on progress and process.

E Bradbury noted the MDA's relationship with the authority.

A Tilley asked if there was any further response from City of Port Adelaide Enfield. E Bradbury noted that Region 7

and MDA executive would discuss engagement further.

ACTION: MDA Executive and Region 7 to discuss membership engagement

Motion: That the Board receive correspondence.

P Raison / B Lockyer

Carried

5 BUSINESS ARISING

5.1 Review of actions table

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

E Bradbury provided a summary of the motions arising and actions completed in detail from previous board meetings

P Maytom spoke about the position paper currently being developed by RAMJO, and explained to the board his next steps following its release in relation to region 9.

E Bradbury spoke to Item 6.2, and updated the board about the MDA's meeting with RAMJO last week, where RAMJO sought feedback from the MDA for their draft position statement.

B Lockyer left the meeting at 10.37am due to technical issues.

5.2 Strategic Advisory Committee

The SAC met on Monday 29th April 2020. The board received and noted the most recent Strategic Advisory Committee minutes.

5.2.1 Matters for referral to SAC

J MacAllister recommended to the board and Strategic Advisory Committee the *Climate Change Risk to Australia's Built Environment* report.

J MacAllister also suggested that the report's authors would be great speakers at this year's national conference.

J MacAllister noted the report contains a really useful score card which measures LGAs against the report's five risks and vulnerabilities.

D Patterson noted that this is a very good document, which has insights into impacts on local government.

D Thurley also agreed, and recommended every council to look at it.

E Bradbury said the report would be a good basis for the second stream of the conference.

Motion: That the Board note updates and receive minutes.

P Miller / P Raison

Carried

6 GENERAL BUSINESS

6.1 Basin Communities Leadership Program– opportunities for collaboration

E Bradbury provided an update to the board about the Basin Communities Leadership Program, and discussed opportunities for collaboration with partners, particularly in the delivery component.

The board discussed the advantages and risks of these opportunities, with further work to be done.

D Patterson suggested that a briefing paper be developed prior to the next meeting including more detailed options and timelines.

ACTION: MDA executive to develop a briefing paper with BCLP delivery options and timeline

6.2 Development of MDA Position Statement

The development and articulation of a position paper is a valuable tool in communicating the position of the MDA on key issues. The position paper will be an ongoing living document available for constant updating, and a platform to tie in other regional positions.

Motion: That the board refer the matter to the Strategic Advisory Group for their consideration and recommendation

D Thurley / D Patterson

Carried

6.3 Lower Lakes Independent Science Review

The Lower Lakes Independent Science Review was released on Tuesday 12th May 2020. Summary of the findings and the full report can be found [here](#).

P Maytom noted concerns regarding the report voiced within his region.

Following a robust discussion among the board, D Thurley noted his support for the draft statement, and stated that as a peak body for local government throughout the Basin, the statement is an appropriate response.

P Miller agreed, and noted that it is not the MDA's place to get involved in arguments within papers.

J MacAllister noted that it is an excellent opportunity to state the case for the benefits of MDA membership, including representation of regional views.

Motion: That the Board

- a) Note the Lower Lakes Independent Science Review
- b) Provide the following feedback on the Lower Lakes Independent Science Review for public distribution.

The MDA has reviewed the report and we are pleased that the findings affirm a consistency in the scientific assumptions underpinning the Basin Plan.

These findings should build confidence across the Basin that the hard work and reforms our communities have navigated to date are based on sound and consistent science.

We support the statements from MDBA Chief Executive Phillip Glyde, about the need to leave behind any debate on the freshwater history of the Lower Lakes and to refocus our efforts on adapting to the challenges of changing water availability, changing weather patterns, changing technologies and changes to our farming and land management practices to create a healthy vibrant future for Basin communities.,

The MDA acknowledges the challenge ahead of reduced inflows and we recognise that this will mean greater challenges for all.

The MDA is developing a framework for our communities to be climate ready. This pathway must consider not just the environmental values of the region but also the social, economic, and cultural values. Local communities and traditional owners MUST be involved at the centre of this process.

The findings of the Lower Lakes Independent Science Review also reaffirm that agricultural communities throughout the whole Basin, including ours, will need ongoing assistance to adapt to a warmer, dryer climate.

State and Federal Governments must work in partnership with industry to invest in R&D to help the agricultural sector adjust to a hotter, drier, more variable climate. Agricultural productivity for the future and a healthy river system must go hand in hand.

J MacAllister / P Miller

Carried

7. Items from the Regions.

A new initiative inviting Regions to contribute items for inclusion in the Board Agenda. Items from the Region will now be a standing Agenda Item.

7.1 Board Sitting Fees

Item from Region 7 – Cr Andrew Tilley

A Tilley introduced the agenda item, noting the extensive work involved in being an MDA Region Chair.

D Patterson noted his concern regarding complications around governance and state legislations, as well as where the funds would originate from.

P Miller agreed and noted that each state might have different legislations.

E Bradbury noted that any consideration of introducing a sitting fee would require a change to the constitution.

MDA constitution:

Part 36. Not-for-profit clause

(2) The Members of the Board will not be entitled to receive fees for their service on the Board (eg: sitting fees).

J MacAllister said a sitting fee would speak to value, but also potentially an inequity within the regions themselves.

ACTION: Board to ask their governance officers regarding provisions for rules in their respective states.

Motion: That the matter of the board member sitting fees be referred to the strategic advisory group for their consideration and advice.

A Tilley / J Campbell

Carried

7.2 Lifeblood Alliance

Region 4 - At Board Meeting 397 – Item 3.4 Cr MacAllister requested that the MDA consider a request from the [Lifeblood Alliance](#) to support its buy backs campaign, noting *“The lifeblood alliance, of which the Nature Conservation Council of NSW is a member, has put out a campaign for buying back more water seeing as how there is still 47.4 GL under the cap available for purchase legally and the money is still there to do that. At the last meeting, there was a question put, would the MDA support this buybacks campaign?”*

A briefing report was provided, noting that at the 2015 AGM the MDA passed a motion stating *“That the Murray Darling Association continues to advocate strongly for legislation for a 1500 gigalitre cap on water purchases in the Basin to be passed in the Parliament.”*

In a submission to the Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications regarding the proposed Water Amendment Bill 2015 the MDA stated that *“The Murray Darling Association emphasizes that the cap should be regarded as a ceiling, and not as a target.”*

The MDA made representation in 2016 to the then Deputy Secretary for Water Hon Bob Baldwin

emphasising that water buy backs create vastly different impacts on different communities, delivering some positive and many adverse social and economic impacts, and should be managed and applied selectively and with great caution and community consultation.

This principle formed the basis of the MDA's commitment to ensuring governments have a detailed understanding social and economic impacts of different water recovery methods across Basin communities.

A robust discussion followed regarding buybacks.

P Miller spoke about the negative consequences of buybacks historically in the Lachlan region and also emphasised the importance of strategic buybacks.

P Maytom noted that the MDA had worked hard to ensure that buybacks were capped, and that a moratorium had been placed on broadscale buybacks.

D Patterson reflected on his first-hand experience of witnessing the impacts of water buybacks at the Cubbie Station study tour last year in Dirranbandi.

S O'Toole said that in no way could Region 12 support the call for further buybacks due to the economic impacts on the communities.

E Bradbury noted that the board should reflect on the relationship and context of buybacks on variable social and economic impacts. Pre 2015, and since the MDA receives a lot of feedback from members who were in dire straits as a result the direct impacts of buybacks, including Deniliquin, Shepparton and Balonne.

A Tilley noted that the impacts of water buybacks are localised and the effects are so varied depending on region, and expressed concern over the state of the Darling River system.

D Patterson suggested that buybacks are discussed further at the upcoming AGM providing members with an opportunity to discuss.

P Maytom and A Tilley agreed.

Motion: That the MDA remain silent and does not articulate a position either way regarding the Lifeblood Alliance buy backs campaign.

P Miller / D Patterson

Carried

7.3 Regional Water Strategies NSW Government

Region 4 – Regional Water Strategies NSW [Fact Sheet](#)

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment is working in partnership with Water NSW, local councils and Aboriginal communities to develop 12 regional water strategies across New South Wales.

Region 4 Chair, Cr MacAllister, indicated that the MDA consider making submission, and to also look at NSW State Infrastructure Plan.

J MacAllister noted that at this stage DPIE is identifying key businesses and infrastructure within each NSW region that require water going into the future, so region by region water needs are noted, and once regional strategies are informed and rolled out, then there will be an overarching NSW water strategies.

The MDA has sought support from DPIE to develop and resource a consultation framework, which would provide resourcing for the MDA to contribute to WRP, CWAPs etc. The request was well received, but to date no funding or framework has been forthcoming. Development of a submission should be considered in

the contest of current strategic priorities and available resources.

D Thurley suggested that we continue to have contact with DPIE and encouraged regions to provide feedback during this process.

Motion: That the board note the NSW Regional Water Strategies process

P Miller / D Thurley

Carried

7.4 2020 National Conference

E Bradbury provided an update and briefing to the board regarding planning and consultation around the MDA's 2020 National Conference.

E Bradbury requested the board's feedback and approval for a virtual conference format and experience.

D Patterson agreed with the virtual conference format and emphasised that the MDA needs to produce a high-quality product.

P Miller agreed and noted that the MDA doesn't have a choice but to do a virtual conference this year. P Miller said the MDA needs to think about registration fees to ensure it is economically viable. P Miller also suggested that this would be a great opportunity to have ministers attend.

D Thurley agreed with P Miller, noting that a virtual conference may result in greater attendance from Ministers.

J MacAllister suggested that the structure of the virtual conference is important to keep participants engaged, suggesting that two x 2.5 hour blocks may be useful, with a 10 minute coffee break in the middle of it.

Reflecting on attendance to a prior virtual conference, P Miller suggested that participants could receive a gift box prior to the virtual conference.

D Patterson suggested engaging professional expertise to help with the facilitation and running of the AGM to ensure that it is a professional and clear experience.

S O'Toole agreed, noting that an AGM can be done successfully online.

Motion: That the board does approves the delivery of the 2020 National Conference and AGM as a virtual event as per the attached proposal to be held in the 2nd week in September.

D Thurley / D Patterson

Carried

ACTION: MDA executive to develop a detailed briefing for meeting 399, outlining the virtual conference platform, and how it will work.

8. CLOSE at 11.57am