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Ordinary Meeting of the Board
Murray Darling Basin Authority Meeting Room,
Monday 26 August 2019
<https://zoom.us/j/984313591>
Via Zoom Calendar

Minutes - MEETING No. 389

Meeting open 10.32am

1. ATTENDANCE

1.1 Present

Cr David Thurley	Albury City Council	Region 1
Cr Jane MacAllister	Wentworth Shire Council	Region 4
Cr Peter Hunter	Renmark Paringa Council	Region 5
Cr Melissa Rebbeck	Alexandrina Council	Region 6
Cr Andrew Tilley	City of Mitcham	Region 7
Cr Paul Maytom	Leeton Shire Council	Region 9
Cr Phyllis Miller	Forbes Shire Council	Region 10
Cr John Campbell	Gunnedah Shire Council	Region 11
Cr Richard Marsh	Balonne Shire Council	Region 12
Pete George	M&S Group	Treasurer
Emma Bradbury	MDA	CEO
Cr Denis Clark	Northern Areas	Region 8

1.2 Non Attendance

Cr Dennis Patterson	City of Greater Shepparton	Region 2
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1.3 Declarations

Item 4.2 – Cr P Miller

2. PREVIOUS MINUTES

2.1 [Meeting 388](#) held via Zoom Calendar 26th July 2019

Motion: That the minutes of board meeting 388 are approved as an accurate record of that meeting, after amendment of previous minutes.

P Maytom / P Miller

Carried

3. REPORTS

3.1 Chairman's report

D Thurley provided an update of recent meeting with Deputy Prime Minister McCormack, regarding the Municipal Engagement Program proposal. In the meeting, Minister McCormack also discussed issues relating to some dam infrastructure in Queensland.

3.2 [Finance reports](#)

P George provided a detailed summary of the finance reports, stating that the organisation's balance

sheet is in a strong position.

P Hunter asked about the status of the LGA account, which is currently at a \$0 balance.

P George answered that this term deposit account is now closed. He explains that the MDA was only getting 1.3% of interest so it was determined to close the account and put it where it was better used.

P Hunter asked for clarification regarding non-current assets and CEO motor vehicle, which was provided by E Bradbury and P George.

Motion: That the MDA

a) notes the commitment by the CEO to amend the CEO's employment contract to remove Clause 13.2.1 which states inter alia that on termination of employment for whatever reason, the CEO may elect to retain ownership of the vehicle.

b) notes the commitment by the CEO to repay the \$15,500 currently shown in the 'Future MV Benefit Reserve' balance sheet account upon trade of the vehicle

c) authorises such repayment to offset the cost of a replacement vehicle or vehicles, at the earliest practicable opportunity

d) agrees to provide a vehicle to the CEO as part of the remuneration package for that position, and

e) acknowledged that the current arrangement was made by the CEO under the intention of a novated lease for the purpose of optimising benefit to the MDA.

E Bradbury / D Thurley

Carried

E Bradbury acknowledged the finance reports reflected positive income for the MDA. E Bradbury also noted that the MDA is anticipating a further income of 500,000 over the next 9 months from the leadership program in three incremental installments.

M Rebbeck inquired about deadline of membership payments, and the region of potential new members.

E Bradbury suggested that the MDA annual report is a useful reference guide of regions and their relevant councils. E Bradbury also noted that MDA Executive will include region chairs with any communication with members and non-members in their region.

Motion : That the finance reports are accepted

P Miller / P Hunter

Carried

3.3 [Chief Executive Officer's report](#)

E Bradbury provided the following comments on the CEO's report:

The Connecting Catchments and Communities was extremely successful. The event was held in Euston on the 30th of July focusing on constraints. It was an extremely interesting meeting, and we are learning with each of the CCCs. 1) These events are growing in reputation, credibility and attraction for peak agencies and authorities to present at. 2) The MDA is starting to turn our mind to how to answer the question to – that was a great conversation, but what are the outcomes? In terms of this particular CCC, we've written letters to the ministers in Ministerial Council incorporating some of the concerns raised at the event, continuing to seek meetings and engage with relevant departments calling for more work to be done to ensure integrated planning and management of regional growth and water allocations is balanced with river operations, and the MDA has presented findings at SEGRA conference.

The CEO and National President also met with Minister McCormack on 16 of August. His comments in relation to the proposed MEO program was a suggestion that we write to him directly and seek further meeting with Minister Littleproud – he acknowledged very clearly that there is merit in providing funding to the MDA, as we are continually being asked to do more for

less.

He will also get someone from the National Water Grid Taskforce for MDA's National conference, and he will seek to encourage Minister McKenzie to attend the conference.

The CEO also met with Municipal Association of Victoria on the 19th of August. This issue around growing memberships is a constant challenge. Memberships are a huge challenge for voluntary organisations. It is important to know that we're not missing some gap in the process. Also, looking at potentially setting up some more proactive working relationship or MOU with MAV which may extend to other LGAs across the Basin.

The MDA was well engaged at SEGRA this year. Communications and Engagement Officer Jess Maher and James went up and presented on the Monday and I presented on the Wednesday. I commend the staff and It is exciting to see our team's capacity grow, which enables representatives and representation to extend beyond the CEO. Congratulations to Jess and James, and they did a terrific job.

J MacAllister noted that she was pleased about the outcomes of the CCC events. J MacAllister also suggested the development of Q and A fact sheets.

Action: That the MDA executive develop Q & A Fact Sheets following CCC events, helping to increase water literacy around the Basin beyond those who attend.

J MacAllister also suggested that MOUs with other local government peak bodies and relevant organizations be a subject of continued discussions/a board workshop.

3.4 Region chairs spoke to the region reports, outlined below.

Region 1

Cr David Thurley: *Region 1 meeting occurred on 23rd of August with a presentation from a senior climatologist from the Bureau of Meteorology who gave a Basin wide and Australia wide climate outlook for the next 12 months. The outlook included low rainfall and high temperatures across a significant part of Australia. In region 1, we are starting the year off with Dartmouth about 30% lower than it was last year, and Hume dam about 10% lower. There are significant concerns that we are heading into a fairly difficult year. Unless there is significant rainfall, the next year will be even more difficult with regard for water for critical human needs.*

Region 4

Cr Jane MacAllister: *There has been a lot of interest in our region from Senators, particularly Senator Malcom Roberts from the One Nation Party, who was here with Southern Riverina Irrigators. Other upcoming visitors include Senator Rex Patrick and Senator Teri Butler. There is also a lot of work happening to find sanctuaries for the fish. If there are fish, we are concerned that they will be dead very soon. It's very dire straits here with no chance of anything changing in the near future. With the recent release of the Wentworth to Broken Hill business case, the region's morale is at its lowest since January. The future is looking bleak but we are soldiering on.*

Region 6

Cr Melissa Rebbeck: *I recently attended a Coorong Lower Lakes and Murray Valley Committee Advisory panel meeting, which was attended by Honourable Sussan Leyy MP, who discussed her thoughts on a national Royal Commission. In addition, we have recently had Region 6 meeting, where a motion was put forward that we don't support royal commission. Region 6 feels like there is enough to get on with to deliver the plan on time and on plan. A great suggestion by Minister Ley was inter-regional visits. Minister Ley found it valuable to go visit all the different regions. This may be a useful project for the MDA in the future.*

Region 7

Cr Andrew Tilley: *Region 7 has had a disappointing decision by state government recently to drop the development application requirement to have rainwater tanks attached to any new development and plumbed into the house so they can at least be used for water for sewerage. We've moved a motion saying we're disappointed with that and we want that decision reversed. In region 7, we are conscious of our responsibility to be good water managers even though we are not in the midst of the basin.*

Action: Emma recommended preparation of a motion to capture Cr Tilley's concern – something that the board might consider moving at the national level. Perhaps as an item at the next board meeting.

Region 8

Cr Denis Clark: *This information about scarcity of water is necessary to get out to some of our councils here in region 8. Some councils don't realise there is a possibility of a shortage of water. I'd like some of that information about river and dam levels to get out to Region 8 – we're outside the Basin and we rely really heavily on that water.*

Region 9

Cr Paul Maytom: *Region 9 meeting will occur on Thursday 29th of August, with Jodie Swirepik, from the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, attending and providing a presentation. Additionally, after a recent experience, I believe it is important for the board to address negativity at other regional events.*

Region 10

Cr Phyllis Miller: *Region 10 will have its first meeting on Thursday 29th of August this week.*

Following the region reports, E Bradbury highlighted the common theme of the importance of communications within and across the regions. E Bradbury also highlighted that MDA is back in discussions of getting a dedicated CRM. Salesforce has been identified, and the MDA is currently in planning for the implementation of that CRM.

Salesforce is a system currently used by MAV and councils from across Australia. This system will assist the MDA executive with targeted communication across to all of our councils.

Motion: That the reports are noted.

J MacAllister / J Campbell

Carried

4. BUSINESS ARISING

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

Board reviewed motions arising and actions completed from the previous board meeting.

4.2 Motions for National Conference [Document 1](#) and [Document 2](#)

Board decided to review and discuss motions proposed and received for the conference at a dedicated workshop session. Additionally, the board agreed there was merit in expressing support for those motions carried at ALGA that have relevance for Basin councils.

P Miller declared that she is a board member of ALGA.

Motion: That the board will gather for a Motion workshop session within the next 3 weeks

M Rebbeck / P Miller

Carried

J MacAllister noted, with apologies, that Region 4 submitted motions following the submission deadline. Region 4 intends to rework some of the ALGA motions.

M Rebbeck noted that there are several similar motions, which may be combined.

P Hunter also noted that it may be wise to have the workshop soon.

Action: MDA Executive will prepare proposed motions in appropriate template, and schedule time and date for motions workshop.

4.3 Election of the president, the vice president and treasurer
Board elected the president, vice president, deputy vice president and treasurer consistent with Part 4, s8 (2), and Part 4 s7(c)(a) of the constitution.

David vacated the chair at 11.32am, and E Bradbury assumed the chair for the election of the national president.

E Bradbury noted that:

It is important that the election supports and provides for strong and stable leadership and succession, supports the development of capacity for the future of the MDA.

To support that process, it was recommended that the board consider the appointment of a president, a vice president and a deputy vice president, and a treasurer.

P Hunter noted that having a vice president and a deputy vice president would be wise, reflecting on previous situations where leadership members vacated unexpectedly with no succession prepared.

E Bradbury commented on what a privileged and productive year it has been with D Thurley as the President, and with the whole board. E Bradbury continued that D Thurley's stability and leadership as the chair national president has been formidable and is valued enormously.

E Bradbury called for nominations for the chair

David Thurley: Nominated P Miller Seconded P Maytom. Cr Thurley accepted the nomination.
There being no further nominations, Cr Thurley elected National President

D Thurley resumed the Chair

Cr Thurley called for nominations for vice president

Jane Macallister: Nominated P Maytom seconded A tilley. Cr Macallister accepted the nomination.

Peter Hunter: Nominated D Clark Seconded P Maytom. Cr Hunter declined

Phyllis Miller: Nominated E Bradbury Seconded M Rebbeck C Miller accepted Nomination

There being no further nominations, Crs Miller and MacAllister duly elected, resolving to accept the positions of Vice president and deputy vice president respectively

Cr Thurley called for nominations for the treasurer

Pete George: Nominated P Miller. Seconded D Thurley. Nomination accepted.

There being no further nominations, P George duly elected.

Motion: That the board appoint a vice president and a deputy vice president to the board executive.
D Thurley / P Maytom Carried

Motion: That the following executive team are duly appointed

D Thurley	National President
P Miller	Vice President
J MacAllister	Deputy Vice President
P George	Treasurer

P Miller / P Maytom

Carried

D Clark left the meeting at 11.40am

5. GENERAL BUSINESS

5.1 MDA draft [Social Media Policy](#)

The Murray Darling Association (MDA) uses social media as a tool to communicate with existing members and the wider community about water issues in the Murray-Darling Basin. A social media policy is important to ensure that anything published on social media – either by the MDA itself or its members – is closely aligned with the organisation’s values and purpose and does not damage the organisation’s reputation in any way. This policy also provides the opportunity for the development and management of regional social media presence.

Following explanation of policy by CEO E Bradbury, D Thurley suggested board to provide feedback on items following meeting, with items to be adopted at a later date.

P Miller noted concerns regarding regions having their own Facebook pages, as the MDA is a national peak body organisation.

D Thurley encouraged all regions to provide comments to E Bradbury on the draft social media policy.

Action: Region chairs to provide feedback on the policy.

5.2 [Barwon Darling Draft Water Sharing Plan Review](#)

The NSW Natural Resources Commission has released its draft recommendations on the Water Sharing Plan for the Barwon-Darling Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2012. The Commission argues that an intense drought, significant volumes of upstream water extractions, an apparent climate shift and the rules within the Plan have all contributed to insufficient ecological, social and cultural outcomes in the Plan area.

The Commission sought feedback on the review by Monday 19 August 2019.

The MDA has not prepared a submission, but did [release a statement](#) on 1 August.

D Thurley also noted recent news article regarding NSW Minister Melinda Pavey’s criticism of the report.

5.3 [Joint Basin government response to the Productivity Commission inquiry report: Murray–Darling Basin Plan: Five-year assessment](#)

E Bradbury provided a summary of the joint basin government response to the Productivity Commission inquiry report: Murray-Darling basin Plan: Five year assessment.

J MacAllister recommended the development of a fact sheet by the MDA executive as board resource,

outlining the list of recommendations, and corresponding goal and action by the Ministerial Council.

Action: MDA Executive will provide briefing paper to the board in preparation for the development of a position statement. Region chairs to provide feedback.

5.4 [Terms of Reference](#) for ACCC inquiry into Murray-Darling Basin Water Markets

Noted by the board.

5.5 [Terms of Reference and Assessment Framework](#) for the Independent panel assessing social and economic conditions on the MDB
[MDA Submission](#)

MDA prepared a submission for the Terms of Reference and Assessment Framework, mostly outlining opportunities for improvement on procedural content. Overall, the MDA supports a better understanding of socio economic conditions in the Murray Darling Basin to better inform policy.

Since 2018 the MDA has been advocating for the development of a rigorous and repeatable framework and methodology against which the social and economic impacts of the Plan can be measured and assessed, to assess impacts of the Plan during its implementation to date, and enable future ongoing assessment. It was identified that such an assessment tool must be able to identify and distinguish short term, unrelated, and one-off impacts from the underlying performance of the Plan. Several detailed project proposals were developed and presented to government in partnership with the CSIRO and University of Canberra.

[Murray-Darling Basin Plan Socio-Economic Impacts Evaluation Framework and Neutrality Test project proposal - March 2018](#)

[Murray-Darling Basin Plan Impacts Evaluation Framework Project Proposal August 2016 - PDF](#)

Following the appointment in July/August 2019 of a panel to assess social and economic conditions in the Basin, the MDA has made [Submission](#) on the Terms of Reference and Assessment Framework, mostly outlining opportunities for improvement on governance and procedural content.

D Thurley commented that, as part of his role within the Basin Community Committee, he received a briefing by Robbie Sefton and two other panel members. D Thurley emphasized his concern regarding the timeframe of the panel's inquiry, stating that within the proposed timeframe, the goal is not achievable with any quality outcome.

P Miller agreed that the MDA should focus on questioning the timeframe of the inquiry.

J MacAllister also noted the existing work that has been done, adequately, respectfully and recently, by the Productivity Commission.

M Rebbeck agreed that existing work has been done, and suggested this could be a motion for the MDA.

R Marsh provided a northern regions perspective, and stated that recent socio economic analysis in the last 18 months or 2 years had already determined the most impacted communities.

P Maytom noted, however, that many things have changed since previous reports. P Maytom stated that it is vital that we somehow come back into the ring as the local government to get the information back some ways.

P Miller left the meeting at 11.59.

Motion:

That the MDA

- a) supports a better understanding of socio economic conditions in the Murray Darling Basin to better inform policy and Basin Plan implementation outcomes,
- b) expresses serious concern the governance arrangements, Terms of Reference and Assessment Framework for the independent panel assessing social and economic conditions on the MDB noting particularly that
 - a. the timeframe allowed for community consultation is manifestly inadequate to the task and lacks respect for a community over consulted and dealing with current drought conditions;
 - b. much of the work outlined in the ToR has been done, adequately, respectfully and recently, by the Productivity Commission which was tasked to *focus on progress towards a pathway for three key priorities including: efficiency measures to recover an additional 450 GL by 2024, consistent with the Basin Plan legal requirement to achieve neutral or improved socio-economic outcomes... have[ing] regard to reviews and audits that have recently been completed or are ongoing.*
- c) maintains that local government is the appropriate vehicle for this work with the technical, partnership, project management, governance, and engagement capabilities inherent in councils.

D Thurley/P Miller

Carried

6. CLOSE at 12.02pm