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Ordinary Meeting of the Board

Monday 25 November 2019

<https://zoom.us/j/633643862>

Via Zoom Calendar

MINUTES - MEETING No. 392

Meeting declared open at 10.31am

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 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 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
Mayor Denis Clark	Northern Areas	Region 8
Cr Brian Lockyer	Barunga West – R8	Guest
Tony Banks	MDA	Executive Officer

1.2 Apologies:

Cr Phyllis Miller	Forbes Shire Council	Region 10
Cr Richard Marsh	Balonne Shire Council	Region 12

Motion: That the apologies be accepted and noted.

P Hunter / J Campbell

Carried

1.3 Declarations

2. PREVIOUS MINUTES

2.1 [Meeting 390](#) held via Zoom Calendar 10 October 2019

2.2 [Meeting 391](#) AGM

Motion: That the minutes of board meeting 390 are approved as an accurate record of that meeting.

D Patterson/ P Hunter

Carried

3. REPORTS

3.1 Chairman's report

D Thurley provided a brief report to the board, including a summary of his attendance at the Water for the Environment Special Account (WESA) meeting, which was also attended by MDA Executive Officer T Banks.

D Thurley also noted that the Region 1 AGM meeting was held last Friday, which included a speaker from the West Corurgan Irrigation Scheme who reported that the WCIS district covers an area of 1,036 square km and has 565 km of open channels. It is a gravity fed system with water pumped from the Murray at Corowa and reaching almost to Jerilderie. The scheme encompasses 159 stock and domestic licence holders on their books. They have about 75GL of general security water allocation. 17GL is put aside for losses and conveyance. Final delivery volumes record an efficiency rate of less than 25%, meaning that with appropriate investment recoveries of over 50GL could be achieved.

This prompted a broad based discussion amongst the board regarding water efficiency initiatives, and J MacAllister noted that the Sunraysia modernization project may be of interest to the board as a good example of an effective efficiency measure.

ACTION: J MacAllister to research Sunraysia modernization project and provide board with information regarding cost/benefit analysis.

E Bradbury suggested that a motion that the MDA consider opportunities to support enhancement of recoveries of the West Corurgan system, and D Thurley agreed but asked for the motion to be more encompassing of other systems, with West Corurgan to only be one example.

Motion: That the MDA call on responsible agencies to assess opportunities for further investment in efficiencies to be gained through upgrade of existing irrigation schemes, including recoveries available in the West Corurgan system, and further, to establish an effective mechanism for continuous review of efficiency opportunities as they arise.

J MacAllister / D Patterson

Carried

Motion: That the Chairman's report be noted.

D Thurley / M Rebbeck

Carried

3.2 [Finance Report:](#)

P George provided a comprehensive summary of the finance reports, noting that the first installment income from the Basin Communities Leadership Program has been received, as well as the National Conference income.

P George explained that expenses include audit fees, conference expenses also, computer expenses (including computer, desks and office equipment, network and telephones), licenses and subscriptions.

P George noted that the bottom line is a very healthy balance sheet, and very healthy profit and loss.

Motion: That the finance reports are noted.

P George / D Thurley

Carried

3.3 [Chief Executive Officers report](#)

E Bradbury highlighted several items from CEO's report:

- *National Conference*: the MDA executive will prepare a report for distribution that will help support council submissions. Up in the next two weeks. E Bradbury noted that conference outcomes speak for themselves – “It was a great conference and I’m incredibly proud.”
- *Membership*: Challenges remains membership. The MDA is looking at strategies to arrest the decline in membership and grow membership. Particularly in SA, there’s a lot of councils ceasing membership. When Cr Miller and I presented at Cowra, the MDA was incredibly well received.
- *HR*: E Bradbury warmly welcomed Tony to the MDA team. Tony has been engaged as the MDA’s strategic leadership coordinator, who will coordinator major projects such as the Basin Communities Leadership program (BCPL), with Sara as support. E Bradbury noted that Tony has already made a significant impact on the productivity of the team.
- *BCPL*: Please see brief provided.

D Patterson asked E Bradbury a question regarding eligibility of non-member shires for the leadership program. E Bradbury advised that eligible communities are proscribed by the Department as a condition of funding, and that the program will run in impacted communities as determined by the MDBA’s economic impacts modelling.

E Bradbury also noted that the MDA is currently undertaking implementation of a CRM which will enable the MDA to more easily facilitate value and benefit for member councils and non-membership councils.

- *Micro grid project*: E Bradbury updated board on the MDA’s funding proposal, in partnership with Dr Jacki Schirmer from the University of Canberra. The proposal investigates the potential of micro-grids within the Murray Darling Basin. The project will operate across the footprint of the Murray Darling Basin with the findings scalable to rural and regional communities Australia-wide.
- E Bradbury also updated the board on upcoming meetings and engagement in Sydney/Canberra including a meeting with Minister Pavey, and attendance at the Native Fish Management Strategy.

Cr A Tilley arrived at 11am

Motion: That the CEO report is noted and accepted.

D Thurley / P Hunter

Carried

3.4 [Region reports](#)

In addition to the written region reports provided prior to Board Meeting 392, the following region reports were provided:

Region 7

Cr Andrew Tilley: *We had a region 7 meeting last week, where we had representations from the NRM board. The main topic of concern was that we’ve had a couple of councils that have dropped out in our region. The substance of it is that the fees that are being charged. The short explanations of it is that Adelaide had a discounted rate, which averaged at just over 3,000. This discount was abruptly ended this year, which was a shock to councils. The elected members in a couple of councils decided to pull out. Emma and I have been having a discussion about it, and I’ve had a discussion with our members about a slow phasing out of the reduced discount, which might be more acceptable. At this stage, we’ve returned to the 2018 fee and slowly phasing out.*

There was a broad-based discussion amongst the board about this issue.

J MacAllister suggested that the MDA’s fee structure and the topic of equity and membership be discussed at the next strategic planning session.

M Rebbeck also suggested education opportunities in region 6 which may help councilors in the region be

better informed about the Murray-Darling Basin.

Region 5

Cr Peter Hunter: *Apologies for being absent. Region 5 hasn't had much activity. Next meeting is December 9th with Commonwealth Environmental Water Office and MDBA input, as well as our CEO.*

E Bradbury spoke about P Hunter's blog in partnership with Stirling East Primary School, which was a brilliant exercise in engagement and education.

Region 9

Cr Paul Maytom: *I attended the ACCC forum in Griffith. There was about 100+ people who attended that. The main topics discussed were price of water, conveyance losses, speculators and transparency. Now we await the outcome. We're putting in a submission from Leeton Shire Council. I'm now on the Committee Advisory Group for the SDL xxx advisory group that's been formed. We recently had a meeting in Deniliquin last week.*

E Bradbury noted that the MDA will prepare an ACCC submission in the couple of next days and asked region chairs to share their own submissions if they are happy to.

J MacAllister suggested that any ACCC submissions made by the chairing councils be sent through to James Marshall, the MDA's policy officer.

ACTION: CEO to compile a list of what meetings are attended by board members and get reports back so people across the Basin are aware of what's going on in projects as they arise.

M Rebbeck recommended scientists in SA who are currently looking at the nutrient load, which may be useful for actions from the conference.

Region 8

Cr Denis Clark: *Region 8 AGM is on this Friday and I'll be stepping aside. We have one nomination Brian Lockyer. Thank you, Brian, for putting your hand up. I won't be ducking away from the MDA. I'll be helping Brian in the Chair's role. Thank you for your support and friendship over the past few years.*

Motion: That the reports are noted.

D Thurley / M Rebbeck

Carried

4 CORRESPONDENCE

4.1 [MDA Name Change – The Hon Mark Coulton](#)

4.2 [Mildura Rural City Council](#)

4.3 [South Burnett Regional Council](#)

4.4 [Stirling East Primary School](#)

Motion: That correspondences are noted.

D Thurley / J Campbell

Carried

5 BUSINESS ARISING

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

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

J MacAllister recommended 4.4 be done immediately.

ACTION: That the MDA executive action item 4.4 immediately and notify all local government associations of the MDA's 76th National Conference dates and ask them to be mindful of these dates.

6 GENERAL BUSINESS

6.1 [Position on the new Bradfield Scheme](#)

A detailed briefing is attached, outlining the current status of the new Bradfield Scheme. At our 2019 AGM carried a motion calling on the National Water Infrastructure Grid Taskforce to investigate the merits and feasibility of a water/river diversion scheme to enhance the sustainability of the Murray-Darling Basin.

Motion: That the board affirms the MDA's support of a detailed investigation of the feasibility of the new Bradfield Scheme.

D Thurley/ P Maytom

Carried

P Maytom raised the need for further information on the Water NSW position on the new Bradfield Scheme. P Maytom noted that he will send through existing information to E Bradbury.

E Bradbury referred P Maytom to the briefing on the new Bradfield Scheme, where further detail is included.

6.2 Position on Climate Change

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – the international scientific body responsible for monitoring climate change – has provided evidence that the climate is warming and that human activity contributes to this increase, which is altering weather patterns globally.

It has long been recognized that climate change is one of the most significant issues that will impact the long-term health of the environment, the economy, and way of life in the Murray-Darling Basin.

There remains some individuals and sections in our community for whom these concepts pose a challenge and for this reason, and the board noted that it is important that the MDA establish and articulate a clear, explicit and unifying position on climate change.

Motion: That the MDA express a statement of recognition recognized that climate change is one of the most significant issues that will impact the long-term health of the environment, the economy, and way of life in the Murray-Darling Basin.

D Thurley / J MacAllister

Carried

J MacAllister suggested that the MDA collate member council positions on climate change, in order to inform its Basin-wide position.

M Rebbeck suggested the motion be amended to include the terminology of climate emergency.

E Bradbury suggested that more work will need to be done in collaboration with region chairs and their member councils, which will be followed by a draft position statement and action plan for approval by the board.

D Thurley noted that the recommendation is simply a statement of general principle, which needs to be fleshed out in more detail.

J MacAllister noted the importance of this motion and expressed her support.

6.3 [ACCC – Shepparton Forum](#)

The ACCC is conducting an inquiry into markets for tradeable water rights in the Murray-Darling Basin. The ACCC is encouraging all interested parties to make a submission in response to the Issues Paper or Short-form Issues Paper and has directly approached the MDA to support the process.

On behalf of the ACCC, the Murray Darling Association sent out information to our members regarding the ACCC Water Markets Inquiry public forums currently being held across the Basin.

Information distributed by the MDA included

- **ACCC Inquiry – Water Markets email:** This [email](#) was sent to the MDA’s entire contact list (1000+ subscribers). The email had a 38.5% open rate (industry average is 21.6%) and a 9.1% click rate (industry average is 1.9%).
- **Basin Bulletin Newsletter:** The MDA also included information about the ACCC inquiry (public forums and submission deadlines) in the [latest MDA member and stakeholder newsletter](#).
- **Social Media:** The MDA has also published several posts on Twitter and Facebook encourage all of our members and stakeholders to attend an ACCC public forum and provide a submission by the due date. We will continue doing this until submissions have closed to ensure our members are aware of upcoming public forums.

Further, the MDA, represented by James Marshall | Policy Officer attended the ACCC forum on Wednesday the 13th of November in Shepperton. A briefing paper on that event is attached.

Motion: That the MDA executive prepare a draft submission to the ACCC based on feedback from the board and existing input from members, for approval by the board by flying minute on or prior to 29th November or if an extension is granted, by the due date determined by ACCC. MDA will seek an extension.

J MacAllister / P Maytom

Carried

J MacAllister noted that representatives from Wentworth Shire Council and Mildura Council attended the first ACCC event in Mildura, where over 200 people attended and were very vocal.

E Bradbury noted that the MDA will put together a draft submission for immediate feedback and comment, and seek extension on the deadline.

6.4 Strategic Planning Workshop

The Annual Strategic Planning Workshop is an important event on the annual calendar.

Motion: That the Board consider Thursday 12th & Friday 13th March 2020 as the dates for next year’s Strategic Planning Workshop in Moama.

D Thurley / J MacAllister

Carried

Motion: That the board adopt the calendar of 2020 board meetings proposed by MDA executive.

J MacAllister / D Patterson

Carried

D Patterson left the meeting at 11.43am.

6.5 MDA Annual Fee’s Region 7

Recommendation to the board that all councils previously receiving the discount will:

- a) have their 2019 invoice credited and reissued at the 2018 price.
- b) receive an incremental increase of no more than 20% p/a over the next 5 years to bring their pricing into line with other councils.
- c) be contacted directly by both phone and email to discuss the transition arrangements.

A Tilley provided feedback, noting that this recommendation should be postponed until next board meeting, and D Thurley agreed, said we should not jump on this too quickly.

J MacAllister proposed to discuss the topic of equitable fees policy and structure in place at the next strategic meeting workshop.

D Thurley suggested that an option could include councils being offered an introductory for the first year of membership with the MDA, to see first-hand what the MDA does and achieves. J MacAllister suggested that this introductory year may also include induction and training.

ACTION: That membership growth and engagement, including equitable fee structure, is included in the upcoming 2020 workshop.

E Bradbury briefed the board on Go1, training content development provider, disruptive technology in how we communicate and train, which is a massive opportunity for changing in how we train.

J Campbell enquired about the MDA National Conference deal at ALGA, which included free registration for the conference.

E Bradbury noted that there was one new registration from that period, with further growth expected at next year's ALGA conference.

Motion: That this item be laid on the table pending completion of a detailed review and further consultation.

A Tilley / D Thurley

Carried

6.6 [Communication Report](#) MDA Name change:

Motion: That the board note the current status of the process to date and approve the roll out of a consultation and branding program to engage the membership in relation to a change of name and branding.

J MacAllister / J Campbell

Carried

D Thurley noted that consultation should be undertaken with both member and non-member councils, and that the process should be done appropriately and with a clear strategy.

J MacAllister suggested that a rebranding of the organization be undertaken, including change of logo. J MacAllister suggested that the MDA executive undertake a Basin wide logo competition.

ACTION: MDA executive to develop a strategy for consultation for roll out with and by the region chairs.

6.7 [Communication report WESA Review](#)

T Banks provided a brief summary of the report regarding the WESA meeting, reflecting comments by D Thurley in the chairman's report.

T Banks noted that the MDA's representation at this event was important as it ensured communities and local government need to be further involved going forward.

E Bradbury commended T Banks on his report and already stellar contribution to the team.

8 CLOSE

P Maytom requested that the MDA executive collate reports from other regions on water efficiency savings.

B Lockyer thanked the opportunity for joining the board and chair and noted special thanks to E Bradbury for invitation to Toowoomba National Conference.

Close of meeting 12.07pm