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Ordinary Meeting of the Board Meeting 399 Monday 15th June 2020

MINUTES - MEETING No. 399

1. ATTENDANCE

1.1. Present

Cr David Thurley OAM	Albury City Council	Region 1
Cr Dennis Patterson	City of Greater Shepparton	Region 2
Cr Peter Raison	Mid Murray 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 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 Andrew Tilley	City of Mitcham	Region 7
Cr Jane MacAllister	Wentworth Shire Council	Region 4
Cr Phyllis Miller	Forbes Shire Council	Region 10
Cr Paul Maytom	Leeton Shire Council	Region 9

Motion: That the apologies be received.

J Campbell / B Lockyer

Carried

1.3. Declarations

2. PREVIOUS MINUTES

2.1. [Meeting 398](#) held via Zoom Calendar Monday 18th May 2020

Motion: That the minutes of board meeting 398 are approved as an accurate record of that meeting.

B Lockyer / S O'Toole

Carried

3. REPORTS

3.1. Chairman's report

D Thurley provided a verbal chairman's report. D Thurley noted that following an article published

in the Border Mail about Farmers for Climate Action, Cr Thurley has been engaging with the organisation and invited their chair to the next Region 1 meeting.

D Thurley noted that the Farmers for Climate Action are pretty widespread across the Basin, including South Australia. D Thurley also noted that this engagement fits well with our climate policy, and issues that Cr Rebbeck has raised multiple times. D Thurley looks forward to seeing where that goes.

3.2. [Finance report](#)

P George provided a comprehensive financial report to the board.

Motion: That the finance reports are noted.

P George / M Rebbeck

Carried

3.3. [Chief Executive Officers report](#)

E Bradbury noted that in this current climate there is a strong opportunity for the MDA to encourage government investment within the MDA's current and future projects and initiatives.

E Bradbury noted that the MDA has been invited to discuss those matters with the Office of the Interim Inspector General, and as a result, the MDA is now planning a trip to Canberra to work with the Ministers for Water, Agriculture, Local Government and Environment respectively.

E Bradbury also noted that planning for the MDA's national conference is well underway and will be a particular focus for the MDA in the coming week.

E Bradbury noted that the strategic plan is coming to its final draft, with the operation plan to follow.

Basin Communities Leadership Program was due to receive further payment as a milestone payment, which has been delayed to late August.

3.4. [Region reports](#)

Region 6

Cr Melissa Rebbeck: *I sent an email about the pending biodiversity fund that government is coming out. I'm wondering if there's opportunities for MDA as well within that biodiversity fund, with your discussions that MDA is having in Canberra, which would perhaps help farmers along the Murray-Darling Basin to look at alternative opportunities for economic development.*

Region 2

Cr Dennis Patterson: *Region 2 had a meeting several weeks ago, with a guest speaker Rob Rendell. The GMID used 500 gigalitres of water in the whole region last year, which is amazing output for 500 gigs of water. We've come up with a couple of motions for the national conference which have since gone to councils to be okay-ed, and also we were lucky enough to have attendance of Federation Council from Region 1.*

E Bradbury noted that it is a key strategic priority of the MDA to review the alignment of regional boundaries, following a motion from a previous AGM instructing the MDA to review the boundary alignments.

E Bradbury noted that this would be a priority for the next 12 months.

E Bradbury noted that some of the MDA's regions have built strong relationships or triangulations between the RDA, LGAs (ROCS) and the MDA. E Bradbury noted that looking at a footprint that aligns those organisations that see value in working more closely with the MDA could be a starting point.

M Rebbeck asked for more information regarding a similar situation in Region 6 and received clarification from E Bradbury.

Region 11

Cr John Campbell: *We had our AGM last week and I've been re-elected as the Chair. Also, with our Climate Ready Communities, our local Murray-Darling Basin Authority Regional Engagement Officer has had a look at it and she'd like to discuss it further, so she'll attend our ordinary meeting to discuss it. The CRC position statement has caused some conversation to be forthcoming already.*

Region 8

Cr Brian Lockyer: *We've got our meeting coming up on the 26th this month. We've got Richard Mintern coming up as well as one of our guest speakers. We were hoping Cr MacAllister would present as well.*

3.5. Communication and Briefing reports

3.5.1 Delegates Report

D Thurley said the delegate's report is a very valuable tool for councils to know what is happening across the Basin.

3.5.2 BCLP Partnership Briefing Report

E Bradbury updated the board regarding the delivery of the Basin Communities Leadership Program. Emma will attend each of the workshops to ensure the MDA engages across the region, builds our profile and memberships of the MDA.

M Rebbeck asked about the opportunity for study tours in the region to learn more about the region.

E Bradbury said that tapping into the MDA's region chairs, the mayors, promoting council and promoting the region is a really valuable benefit of the program.

ACTION: Cathy will circle back and continue to work with Region Chairs to identify opportunities for BCLP workshop locations, including study tours in the Lower Lakes

Motion: That the reports are noted.

M Rebbeck/ B Lockyer

Carried

4. CORRESPONDENCE

4.1. Correspondences Out

4.1.1 [The Hon Minister Keith Pitt MP](#)

4.1.2 [Mr Michael Keelty AO APM](#)

4.2 Correspondences In

4.2.1 [Mr Richard Marsh](#)

Motion: That the Board receive correspondence.

5 BUSINESS ARISING

5.1 Review of actions table

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

Board reviewed the motions arising and actions completed in detail from previous board meetings

Motion: That the Board note updates

J Campbell / S O'Toole

Carried

5.2 Murray-Darling Basin Roundtable

As previously advised to the board (Meeting 394 Item 5.3) the MDA has been invited to and will host a Murray Darling Basin Roundtable event initiated by the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists.

Murray-Darling Basin Roundtable will bring together key stakeholders to address immediate and long-term challenges of water security and river health in the Basin. This is an invitation-only event involving around 30 representatives from across the Basin. Participants will work towards identifying constructive actions that can be supported by communities, industries, and governments.

The aim of this roundtable to bring together representatives from across the Basin to work through opportunities for moving forward with water reform which will ensure long term river system health and enhance water security across the Murray-Darling Basin. We seek to:

1. Reaffirm commitments for a healthy river system with resilient communities, including first nations, and, a prosperous economy in the long term.
2. Agree on constructive actions to progress water reform which may also be supported by regional communities, businesses, and governments; and
3. Identify important issues that need to be addressed in the future.

The MDA has also been invited to contribute as a participant via Cr Thurley. The roundtable will occur in Albury on Tuesday 03rd November 2020 subject to current restrictions.

P George left at 11.07am

M Rebbeck requested more information and to be part of the process/ kept in the loop. M Rebbeck also asked how other bodies could be invited to be part of the process.

ACTION: MDA Executive to circulate the Murray-Darling Basin Roundtable invitation including the participant list to board members

Motion: That the Board note the Roundtable discussions.

D Thurley / M Rebbeck

Carried

5.3 2024 Strategic Plan Draft

The MDA Executive have completed several collaborative meeting workshops in preparing of the 2024 Strategic Plan Draft. This comprehensive Strategic Plan draft has been forwarded to the Strategic Advisory Committee for their review and feedback.

On completion of the SAC review the final draft will be circulated via flying minute to the Board for approval.

5.4 Membership

Re – Item 398 – 3.2 - Memberships

At the May Board Meeting 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.

On 15th May a total of 90 Membership invoices totalling \$261,017.67 were sent out accompanied by a copy of the May Delegates Report and the attached [message from the CEO and National President](#). Invoices were dated 1 July 2020.

Remittances worth \$14,796.44 have been received in advance.

On 10/06/2020, the City of Port Adelaide Enfield, the last remaining discounted council resolved to renew its membership at full fee-paying rate.

6 GENERAL BUSINESS

6.1 MDA & CSIRO Collaborative Relationship Agreement

A framework under which the MDA and CSIRO will collaborate on research projects. This Agreement sets out the overall terms that apply to the relationship between CSIRO and MDA for the Term.

The relationship Agreement has been done.

Regions to provide suggested projects through the [Our Region: Informing the Board Agenda](#) with project agreements drafted on a project by project basis.

Motion: That the Board endorse the collaborative Relationship Agreement between the MDA & CSIRO.

B Lockyer / D Patterson

Carried

6.2 MDA Science and Education Advisory Subcommittee

Boards often use subcommittees to increase overall efficiency, to develop talent, and engage specific skills and expertise. Work can be delegated to the subcommittees to deal with complex or specialised issues. It is important to recognise that subcommittees only make recommendations for action to the full board, which retains collective responsibility for decision making.

The Science and Education subcommittees is an opportunity to develop knowledge within the MDA, by inviting skills-based members who can focus their skills, expertise and networks in areas that will benefit the MDA and align with our strategic priorities. The subcommittees are also an opportunity to indicate to members and stakeholders that the board is taking the strategic partnership with the CSIRO, and our commitment to initiatives that build education outcomes across the Basin seriously and invite their active participation.

The opportunity for the chair of the subcommittee to sit on the MDA CSIRO Steering Committee may also stimulate membership growth and engagement. The following terms of reference are proposed for your consideration and comment.

D Thurley asked each region chair to provide feedback on both the terms of reference, and the relationship agreement, to provide written feedback by the end of this week.

ACTION: That the board review the draft Science and Education Subcommittee Terms of Reference and provide feedback via email to be discussed at the next meeting of the board.

6.3 Review of authorised Region Delegates

In preparing for the AGM, the MDA executive team is undertaking our annual audit of authorised region delegates to ensure accuracy of voting entitlements.

A table containing data indicating total active and eligible councils has been sent to all region chairs for

review and confirmation. Thank you to all regions who have forwarded updated delegate information. Information on your regional nominated Delegates will assist the Executive towards the 2020 virtual National Conference planning.

6.4 Board and AGM meeting dates

The following dates have been scheduled for the next 6-month period if approved calendar invites will be forwarded. The AGM scheduled for Wednesday 16th September 2020.

- Monday 20th July 2020
- Monday 17th August 2020
- **Wednesday 16th of September 2020**
- Monday 19th October 2020
- Monday 16th November 2020
- Monday 21st December 2020

Motion: That the Board note the upcoming board meeting dates and confirm the date for the 2020 AGM on Wednesday 16th September 2020

D Thurley / M Rebbeck

Carried

6.5 Correspondence to Basin Official Committee

In planning for the 2020 National Conference and to support our current advocacy priorities and representation, the MDA will write to all members of the Ministerial council and Basin Officials to invite their participation as presenters as a panel at the National Conference. This will also represent a good opportunity to emphasize other points.

Motion: That the MDA write to the Basin Official Committee requesting that the Ministerial Council

- a) Ratify the office of the Inspector General
- b) Urge the NSW Government to complete its floodplain harvesting policy and submission of water resource plans immediately
- c) Invite the Basin Ministers to attend and present as a group at the MDA 76TH MDA National Conference

D Thurley / J Campbell

Carried

6.6 MDA Virtual Conference Options [**Confidential**]

Board Meeting 388 - Item 7.4 required that the MDA executive develop a detailed briefing report for Meeting 399, outlining the virtual conference platform, and how it will work.

Motion: That the Board note the briefing paper

B Lockyer / M Rebbeck

Carried

6.7 Motions for National Conference

A reminder to all regions that motions need to be provided by the 15th July 2020

6.8 ABC story – “Impractical to monitor water trades in Murray-Darling

The ABCs 7.30 program has revealed that NSW water officials had no official process for checking water trades and believed it would be "impractical" to undertake compliance action over misreported trades.

The story can be accessed here:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-11/water-officials-believed-it-impractical-to-monitor-water-trades/12340910>

The emails can be accessed here: <https://www.scribd.com/document/465078713/Water-NSW-emails>

D Thurley noted that the issue of value of trades has been a long-standing issue, and particularly no-cost trades.

D Patterson noted that this issue is reflective of a lack of confidence in the water market. D Patterson said that:

“Until we get a clear and defined picture of how the water market works, no one has any confidence in it. Until there’s one set of rules for everyone, then everyone can see that it’s clear. That’s what we need. That’s what we should be pushing for.”

E Bradbury agreed, and noted that the MDA will prepare a statement regarding the lack of confidence in the market.

ACTION: The MDA will prepare a statement regarding the lack of confidence in the market.

M Rebbeck provided feedback to Emma re: process and said that the MDA’s preparatory work is valued. M Rebbeck also noted that there’s been a few inquiries around similar issues, so it would be useful to have a unified response.

D Patterson expressed that Basin needs a universal water trading policy.

7. Items from the Regions.

Our Region: Informing the Board Agenda

7.1 Region 11 - Water Strategies

Region 11 propose to inform DPIE of our concerns regarding lack of consultation with primary producers, irrigators and the processing industries regarding the timing of the Regional Water Strategies.

Refer to the attached document link above. In particular, the page titled *“How do RWSs fit with other policy instruments?”*

It should be noted that the call for additional consultation on Regional Water Strategies is unrelated and therefore, unlikely to impact timelines for the preparation of the NSW Water Resource Plans which the MDA is encouraging with urgency.

Motion: That the Board support

- a) write to DPIE and support Region 11’s call to extend the closing date of the Regional Water Strategy
- c) Seek clarification on relationship and purpose with NSW Water Resource Plans
- c) Seek better consultation overall between DPIE and local government

J Campbell / M Rebbeck

Carried

ACTION: MDA to write a letter to support expressing support for Region 11

E Bradbury noted that Cr Raison is on the line and made comment that having been involved in one of the triangulation meetings in Region 5 between RDA, LGA and MDA, very supportive of the outcome from his region’s point of view.

D Patterson asked whether there was an opportunity for the MDA to propose a motion at the upcoming AGM regarding water policy and trading.

E Bradbury noted that several 2019 motions referred to water trading/policy, but the MDA executive would investigate further.

D Patterson noted he would like this item discussed further at the next board meeting.

M Rebbeck also noted that this could be a good item to be discussed at the Murray-Darling Roundtable.

Meeting closed at 12.00pm