



MDA Delegates Report

December 2022

The Murray Darling Association (MDA) is Australia's peak body representing local government across the Murray-Darling Basin.

The following report should be tabled at council and provides delegates and their councils with an overview of MDA activities and engagements.

A note from the Murray Darling Association CEO:

We have continued to connect with related parties in the water space, both Federally and State based. Of particular note, the Water Minister, Tanya Plibersek, spoke at our conference and there has been ongoing communication following. We had a follow up call and had a very good discussion about many subjects, including MINCO and recurrent funding for the MDA.

The Minister very much enjoyed being at the MDA conference and enjoyed meeting many of our members from across the basin. She indicated that her door is open to us and looks forward to further engagement such as through the Water Reform Taskforce and MINCO.

We received much media attention following the conference. This is continuing, so we will try to capitalise where appropriate, and will continue to develop relationships with State Ministers and relevant bodies.



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1. Foreword

In addition to ‘business as usual’ issues, we have been focusing on key deliverables, including:

- *Executing, reporting, and finalising CSIRO ‘Circular Economy’ project*
- *Preparing, organising, and delivering MDA conference and AGM*
- *Working on financials*
- *Following up on previous motions and preparing motions for the AGM*
- *Advocacy*

2. Key Meetings & Events

The below table summarises the association’s key engagements with the Basin communities.

Date	Event/meeting	Location
5/10/22	Meeting with Julia Reynolds – The Murrumbidgee – Big water, big future project <i>Discussing the progress and future of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, collaboration, environmental water, and the changing climate</i>	Virtual
10/10/22	Meeting with Hon Tanya Plibersek MP	Virtual
12/10/22	One Basin CRC Partner Briefing – October Update	Virtual
16/10/22	Darling Downs & SW Queensland Council of Mayors	Virtual
20/10/22	Meeting with Water Stewardship Asia Pacific <i>Post 78th National Conference Follow-up wit CEO Rod Knight and Megan McLeod</i>	Virtual
25/10/22	Meeting with Sharon Davis – One Basin CRC	Virtual
2/11/22	Interview with Inside Water Magazine <i>Discussing Murray-Darling Basin representation, advocacy, collaboration, and MDA policy positions</i>	Virtual
9/11/22	CSIRO Webinar – Bradfield Scheme	Virtual
10/11/22	November Peak Groups Briefing 2022	Virtual
22/11/22	Meeting with Minister Deborah Frecklington MP <i>Discussing advocacy for a Floodplain Harvesting Volume Cap</i>	Virtual
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3. Working towards Vision 2025

Vision 2025 is the Murray Darling Association's five-year Strategic Plan. It sets out the association's goals and describes the strategies we will implement to achieve them.

Vision 2025 is built upon the foundations established by the 2016-19 Strategic Plan, and confirms our place as the Basin's primary driver in local leadership and policy development.

To view the current Strategic Plan, visit the [MDA website](#), or contact the office on [\(03\) 5480 3805](tel:0354803805)

Goal	How	Reference
Science & Education	MDA-CSIRO Partnership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circular Economy Market Analysis workshops 	<i>The Murray Darling Association will be conducting workshops across NSW, QLD, VIC, and SA, engaging LGA/Councils and LG Associations such as ALGA, MAV, LGNSW, LGAQ, and LGASA [See outgoing correspondence, MDA Board Meeting 416]</i>
Inform better government policy	MDA-CSIRO Partnership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circular Economy Market Analysis workshops 	<i>The Murray Darling Association conducted workshops across NSW, QLD, VIC, and SA, engaging LGA/Councils and LG Associations such as ALGA, MAV, LGNSW, LGAQ, and LGASA</i>
Engagement in policy process	Engagement with Hon Tanya Plibersek MP via letter commending the Federal Government to support and maintain the Murray-Darling Basin Plan's goal of recovering an additional 450GL of Up Water.	<i>[See Outgoing Correspondence, MDA Board Meeting 416] [See Incoming Correspondence, Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Board Meeting 418]</i>
	Engagement with NSW, VIC, QLD, and SA Government Water Ministers and Shadow Ministers commending Basin Governments to legislate the volume of floodplain harvesting to the 1995 Cap for the protection and environmental integrity of Northern NSW, Southern Queensland Rivers, and Barwon Darling Barka Rivers	<i>[See Outgoing Correspondence, MDA Board Meeting 418] [See Incoming Correspondence, Deborah Frecklington, MDA Board Meeting 418]</i>
	Engagement with NSW Water Minister and Shadow Minister counterpart regarding the NSW Draft Western Regional Water Strategy	<i>[See Outgoing Correspondence, MDA Board Meeting 418]</i>
	Engagement with the MDBA and DCCEEW executive teams commending the publishing of clear, simple, timely, and accurate reporting to show the 450GL Recovery Programs progress.	<i>[See Outgoing Correspondence, MDA Board Meeting 418] [See Incoming Correspondence, Executive Director Tim Goodes, MDA Board Meeting 418]</i>
	Engagement with the MDBA executive team commending that the effects of sea-level rise on the lower Murray River, Lakes, and Coorong be included in their Climate Change research in the 2026 Murray-Darling Basin Review Report and the updated Basin Plan.	<i>[See Outgoing Correspondence, MDA Board Meeting 418]</i>
	The MDA engaged with Basin Governments to advocate for funding toward Circular Economic Projects that include drawing down carbon and mitigating and adapting to climate change.	<i>[See Outgoing Correspondence, MDA Board Meeting 418] [See Incoming Correspondence, Hon Susan Close MP, MDA Board Meeting 418]</i>
	Engaged with the NSW Water Minister Hon Kevin Anderson MP requesting a clarification of the NSW Annual Water Allocation Methodology.	<i>[See Outgoing Correspondence, MDA Board Meeting 418]</i>
	Engaged with the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP commending the Minister set final submission dates and apply Section 68 of the Water Act 2007 for the MDBA to prepare and approve the NSW Water Resource Plans.	<i>[See Outgoing Correspondence, MDA Board Meeting 418]</i>
	Engaged with the Federal Environment and Water Minister Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, and the NSW Water Minister Hon Kevin Anderson MP commending the Federal and NSW Government support the RAMSAR Site nomination for the Menindee Lakes.	<i>[See Outgoing Correspondence, MDA Board Meeting 418]</i>
	Engaged with Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Basin Government Water Ministers and their Shadow Minister counterparts commending the removal of Benefit Cost Ratio requirements for funding applications for water storage projects.	<i>[See Outgoing Correspondence, MDA Board Meeting 418]</i>



4. MDA Board Meetings

The Murray Darling Association held its most recent Board Meeting on 5 September 2022. The MDA Board meet monthly for the purpose of knowledge sharing, regional development, and inter-regional collaboration.

The MDA makes all board meeting [Minutes](#) available on the MDA website.

5. Region Meetings

Our 12 regions meet quarterly. Each meeting is an incredible opportunity to collaborate with councils in your region and hear from fantastic guest speakers. To find out when your next region meeting is, please [contact your chair](#) or our office on [\(03\) 5480 3805](tel:0354803805).

To find out more about what is happening in other MDA regions, please head over to www.mda.asn.au, where all region meeting [minutes](#) are available.

6. CSIRO and the Circular Economy

CSIRO Land and Water has partnered with MDA to investigate and explore a series of strategic growth areas that align with the biggest land and water challenges faced by Australian governments/agencies, industries, and communities. These growth areas will build on capabilities and that of our partners and transform the boundaries of the types of products, research projects and services we might collaborate on.

They have identified Repurposing Waste / Circular Economy as a strategic growth area, and we are interested in validating this with LGA's as a valued partner. We would like to understand more about how LGA's work within the repurposing waste / circular economy area within their organisation. They are also keen to hear about any future aspirations they might have in regard to infrastructure solutions they need now and into the future.

To capture these insights, we completed a series of meetings in May and June that will help inform the future of this growth area and ensure they can design solutions that are of value for all. We have now successfully completed all requirement and presented to the management of CSIRO. Very pleased with the Association's work, the CSIRO stated that *"the MDA had achieved in 3 months what would have taken CSIRO years"*.

There is the potential to conduct further work with CSIRO departments which we are continuing to explore. We have developed good working relationships with most of their departments – in particular, the Land and Water Division. Given the interest around managed aquifer recharge, there is potential to partner with CSIRO again regarding this area of work.



7. 79th National Conference Partnership Through Collaboration Across the Basin

The feedback from our National Conference has been very positive. We were able to secure the key speakers we wanted as well as relevant sponsors. The number of delegates was reasonable, although could have been higher. Overall, we were very pleased with the result. In addition, we made a positive contribution to our financial position.

Looking forward, I am pleased to officially launch the webpage and invite you to the Murray Darling Association's 79th National Conference and AGM to be held 19~21st September 2023 in Murray Bridge, SA.

The proposed theme is: "Partnership Through Collaboration Across the Basin".

This exciting event will bring together leaders and decision makers from across the Murray-Darling Basin, and will be a wonderful opportunity to meet again, face to face.

Murray Bridge is a bustling rural town sitting in prime position on the banks of the Murray River. Less than an hour from Adelaide, wind back the clock to river time and kick back on a leisurely houseboat or float away to a world of relaxation on The Cube. Amp up the pace and hit the river wakeboarding, water skiing, swimming or fishing or go on an African safari and get up close and personal with lions, giraffes and rhinoceros at Monarto Safari Park. Come nightfall, look to the skies; with low rainfall, clear skies and virtually no light pollution, the outskirts of Murray Bridge are one of the best spots to explore the cosmos in South Australia.

The MDA's 79th National Conference & AGM is your opportunity to be part of the solution – to join the conversation, to inform future policy, and to engage with the innovators, scientists, educators, and leaders of our time.

Join us in the Rural City of Murray Bridge, home to the winding Murray River and its waterways: home to the winding Murray, where local, technical, and political leaders will come together to tackle the big issues of the Basin and forge a future of connected councils, catchments, and communities.

The program for presenters and guest speakers is well underway and the Planning committee are working on all logistical matters to secure a whole Murray Bridge tourist experience.



8. Engagement Report on the benefits of membership

We are embarking on a membership drive, in order to try to secure new members as well as retain our current membership. In particular, we want to ensure that the Northern Basin is engaged. We are pleased to update the Board with the news that Tamworth Regional Council has just joined, and we are trying to arrange meetings with them accordingly.

With over 167 councils in the MDB, the ongoing partnership between Councils and the Murray Darling Association elevates local and regional issues and priorities to the state and federal level providing national recognition of local priorities.

Membership to the MDA delivers social, economic, and environmental benefits to each community by creating partnerships, participating in events, and accessing networks and services that align with and support all Community plans, in the areas of Community, Environment, Economy and Council.

We know that councils and the local government sector are increasingly resource challenged and are looking for services, relationships and partnerships that assist in achieving your council's and your region's strategic priorities.

Water, land management, energy and community wellbeing are front and centre of almost every council's priorities. A strong relationship between council and the MDA provides opportunities to

- partner with councils and regional groups in providing local case studies and experience to support regional and national positions and advocacy strategies.
- raise the profile of your council and the local government sector through MDA's partnerships with the Commonwealth.
- present strategically aligned priorities, objectives, and advocacy to state and federal governments.
- leverage regional efficiencies and Basin-scale capability and positions.

Benefits to your community.

The MDA fosters a culture of community collaboration and leadership development to improve social, cultural, environmental, and economic well-being across the Murray-Darling Basin.

Working together with member councils and our regions, we achieve policy change and ensure local knowledge informs the national dialogue on water reform, land management, environmental sustainability, leadership development and education, and regional economic diversification.

Council's participation at MDA region and national meetings builds regional relationships and elevates the community's priorities to the state and federal level, informing decisions and outcomes that impact your local area.



Benefits to your environment.

There is no future on a dry riverbed. At the core of our vision is a strong emphasis on science and education to inform policies for the sustainable management of Basin resources to ensure a healthy and prosperous future.

The MDA's vision, which drives our strategic and operational direction, is for local government and communities to work together to achieve a healthy, vibrant, and thriving Murray-Darling Basin. As a result, the MDA has:

- Partnered with CSIRO with a focus on science and education to address some of the Basin's toughest challenges.
- Advocated for and represented local government in environmental issues, including floodplain harvesting etc.
- Partnered with Murray-Darling Basin Authority, better supporting local government through information sharing and representation.
- Supported regions to develop Climate Ready Communities statements

Benefits to your economy.

For many, if not all, Basin communities, water security plays an important role in economic growth and sustainability. Through the MDA's regional alignments and partnerships, member councils leverage the value of knowledge sharing across the local government and regional development sectors to peruse water quality, water security and other priorities.

The MDA provides member councils with partnerships that support regional economic development and diversification initiatives.

Benefits to your council.

Our mission is to provide high value services to our members, and their communities by delivering quality projects, events and products create enduring value for Basin communities and governments.

Our achievements

The Murray Darling Association has been successful in shifting policies to better reflect the needs of the Basin communities, and we are continuing to grow our reach and impact as portrayed in our [Vision 2025 Strategic Plan](#).

The relationship between the MDA and our member Councils contributes strongly to the development of the local government sector as a whole and our collective role in ensuring a vibrant, sustainable future for the Murray-Darling Basin.



78th National Conference Motions and Engagement



Menindee Lakes – Ramsar Site *(Motion 6.3)*

This motion sought support, and promotion, for the RAMSAR Site nomination for the Menindee Lakes with a goal to preserve the environment and ecological integrity of the Menindee Lakes system and the Lower Darling Barka for communities and First Nations people. The Motion also sought to ensure that there are unregulated lengths of wild river to enhance native fish breeding through floods of various sizes.

The MDA has written to, and engaged with, the Federal Minister for the Environment and Water Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, as well as the NSW Minister for Lands and Water Hon Kevin Anderson MP, and is awaiting further correspondence.

Floodplain Harvesting Volume Cap *(Motion 6.4)*

This motion sought to support and promote the legislation of the volume of floodplain harvesting to the 1995 Cap for the protection and environmental integrity of Northern NSW, Southern QLD Rivers, and Barwon Darling Barka Rivers.

The MDA has written to, and engaged with, Basin State Government Water Ministers, and their Shadow Minister counterparts.

The MDA has received correspondence from the QLD Shadow Water Minister and is scheduling a time to discuss the MDA's motion on the Floodplain Harvesting Volume Cap.

Correspondence from **Hon Kevin Anderson MP:**

- Noted that Floodplain harvesting was currently bring brought into the licensing framework in the Northern inland Murray-Darling Basin, following completion in the NSW Border River and Gwydir valleys.
- Noted that Floodplain harvesting had been included as part of extraction limits specified in water sharing plans in the Basin.
- Indicated that as part of licensing Floodplain Harvesting, rules specific to these licenses will be included in the relevant water sharing plans through an amended order.

The MDA is awaiting further correspondence.



FIND OUT MORE!



AGM MINUTES



PRESENTATIONS

Draft Western Regional Water Strategy Consultation *(Motion 6.5)*

This motion aims to commend the amendment to the NSW DPIE Western Regional Water Strategy to increase the critical dry conditions trigger for the Menindee Lakes System.

Progressing this motion, the MDA has engaged with the NSW Water Minister Hon Kevin Anderson MP.

Correspondence from **Hon Kevin Anderson MP:**

- Noted that the NSW Government had implemented unprecedented statutory protections to prohibit floodplain harvesting take when there is less than 195GL stored in Menindee Lakes, until local Rivers are running close to their channel capacity again.
- Indicated that the draft Western Regional Water Strategy had also proposed restricting lower priority licences when the total storage of Menindee Lakes was below 195GL.
- Noted that during public consultation on the draft strategy the Government had heard views from some stakeholders that the Menindee Lakes trigger should be higher than 195GL, and that the suggested trigger of 480GL by some stakeholders and the MDA had been noted and is being considered, with additional hydrological modelling being undertaken on proposals for the Menindee Lakes trigger to be presented in the Final Western Regional Water Strategy later this year.

Contact the Murray Darling Association

For more information, or to find out what membership can do for you!

03 5480 3805

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Effects of Sea-Level Rise (Motion 6.6)

This motion's objective was to commend the MDBA to encompass the effects of sea-level rise on the lower Murray River, Lakes, and Coorong in their Climate Change research for inclusion in the 2026 Murray-Darling Basin Plan Review Report and the updated Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

Progressing the motion's objective, the MDA has engaged with the [MDBA](#) and is awaiting further correspondence.

Greater First Nations Involvement (Motion 6.7)

This motion's objective was threefold:

- to commend MDA Member Councils to consider the assignment of Traditional names for dual-naming of locations within their district, as well as consider the inclusion of local Traditional place names, as well as non-Aboriginal place names and translations on all replacement signs in their district, and
- To commend the State Governments to ensure appropriate funding was allowed in each financial year or the inclusion of these names to replacement and new signs, and
- To commend Federal and State Governments to ensure greater awareness of Traditional Culture is offered in regional school curriculums

Progressing the motion's objective, the MDA has engaged with Federal and State Ministers relevant to First Nations, Heritage, and Education.

Correspondence from **Executive Director Zack Haddock**:

- Noted that the Victorian Government's strategy for improving educational access, inclusion and outcomes for Aboriginal learners was set out in Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026 (Marrung).
- Indicated that as part of Marrung, is a commitment to working in partnership with Aboriginal People, communities, and organisations at every level.
- Noted that the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) was the Department's principal partner in Aboriginal education.
- Indicated that the latest version of the Australian Curriculum was approved by Australian Education Ministers in April 2022, and included revisions to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority.
- Noted that teachers must follow the Koorie Cross-Curricular [Protocols](#) when teaching about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

The MDA is awaiting further correspondence.

Progress Reporting on the 450GL Recovery Program (Motion 6.8)

With an objective to commend the MDBA and the DCCEEW to publish clear, simple, timely, and accurate reporting to show progress on the delivery of the 450GL Recovery Program.

Progressing this motion, the MDA has engaged with the [MDBA](#) and the [DCCEEW](#).

The MDA has received correspondence from the MDBA noting that the MDBA and the DCCEEW were committed to increasing transparency around Basin Plan implementation activities, while also highlighting the [current DCCEEW programs](#) supporting the recovery of efficiency measures.

The MDBA indicated that both the MDBA and the DCCEEW regularly report on the progress of water recovery in the Murray-Darling Basin, with progress against 'bridging the gap' and the efficiency measures program was available on the [DCCEEW website](#) and the [MDBA website](#). With the MDBA required to publish and maintain a register of measures that include the [water made available](#) under the efficiency measures programs for each Sustainable Diversion Limit resource area for the water accounting year.

NSW Water Resource Plans (Motion 6.9)

This motion sought to engage with the Federal Minister for the Environment and Water to set final submission dates and apply Section 68 of the [Water Act 2007](#), enabling for the MDBA to prepare and approve the NSW Water Resource Plans as required by the Basin Plan.

Progressing this, the MDA has written to the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP and is awaiting further correspondence.

Circular Economic Project Funding (Motion 6.10)

This motion's objective was to commend the Basin Governments to support regional local governments to have access to information and technology that will allow circular economic projects that encompass waste to energy, increased economic improvement in towns, carbon drawdown, renewable energy, and water savings and hence enhanced economic viability to the region.

Progressing this, the MDA has written to the NSW, QLD, VIC, and SA Governments.

Correspondence from **Hon Susan Close MP**:

- Highlighted one of the Minister's portfolio agencies, Green Industries SA (GISA), in leading the State's transition to a circular economy by delivering programs and developing policy, and regularly made available funding accessible via the [GISA website](#).

Circular Economic Project Funding (Motion 6.10) cont.

- The Minister for Climate, Environment and Water also made note of the [GISA YouTube webpage](#) which promotes the outcomes of the projects through the development of case studies, information, guidance, and tools.
- Noting a recent project undertaken with the Regional Development Australia Murraylands and Riverland (RDAMR) Committee developing a Circular Economic Opportunities Report.
- The Minister invited interested MDA members to register for the official Report launch at two panel discussion breakfast events to be held in November 2022 at [Murray Bridge](#), and [Berri](#). The Minister also indicated that the GISA officer responsible for the project, Senior Adviser – Business Sustainability Mr Oliver Lovat, could also be contacted for more information via [PHONE](#) or [EMAIL](#).

Correspondence from **Hon James Griffin MP**:

- Noted that in June 2021 the NSW Government released the NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041 ([WaSM Strategy](#)), outlining the Government's approach to transitioning to a Circular Economy over the next 20 year. Indicated a key focus area of the WaSM Strategy was to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and noted that \$356m was being invested over five years from 1 July 2022 into new programs and initiatives to minimise waste, increase recycling, and decarbonise the economy.
- Noted that the NSW Government had commissioned a study to identify opportunities for carbon abatement through the use of recycled materials in construction and manufacturing, with the study helping to shape the \$37m Carbon Recycling and Abatement Fund.
- The Minister has asked the NSW Environment Protection Authority, as the lead agency for implementing the WaSM Strategy, to reach out to the MDA for opportunities to engage further.

Correspondence from the **Deputy Director-General Karen Hussey**:

- Noted that the QLD Government had established the Office of Circular Economy within the Department of Environment and Heritage Policy and Programs. Indicated that this was building on the QLD Waste management and Resource Recovery Strategy and was backed by the \$1.1b Recycling and Jobs fund.
- Noted that at present the focus for investment of the Recycling and Jobs fund with Local Governments in QLD was establishing resource recovery infrastructure across regional QLD, including organics processing facilities.

Circular Economic Project Funding (Motion 6.10) cont.

- Indicated that there would be additional opportunities to engage with the Department on projects and strategies to enhance the Circular Economy as new programs were rolled out.
- Identified that a state-wide program for education and behaviour change had commenced and would focus initially on improving recycling outcomes for households.

The MDA is awaiting further correspondence.

Clarification of Annual Water Allocations Methodology (Motion 6.11)

This motion sought to clarify the methodology used by the NSW Government in the annual Water Allocations.

Progressing this motion, the MDA has engaged with the NSW Minister for Lands and Water, Hon Kevin Anderson MP, and is awaiting further correspondence.

Benefit Cost Ratio (Motion 6.12)

This motion's objective was to commend the Federal, and State, Governments to remove the Benefit Cost Ratio requirements for water storage project funding applications.

Progressing the motion's objective, the MDA has engaged with the Federal Government Minister for the Environment and Water, Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, The Shadow Water Minister Senator Perin Davey, as well as State Government Water Ministers and Shadow Ministers, and is awaiting further correspondence.

Ownership and access to water for Cultural and Economic purposes for the Basin's Indigenous Nations (Motion 6.13)

This motion sought restorative water justice for Indigenous nations within the Basin via the provision of cultural flows, first articulated in the Echuca Declaration, in 2007.

Progressing the motion's objective, the MDA has engaged with the Basin State Water Ministers, as well as the DELWP Deputy Secretary Terry Garwood.

The MDA is awaiting further correspondence.

Exploring the potential for Managed Aquifer Recharge (Motion 6.14)

This motion's objective was separated into three parts:

- Quantify the savings through efficiencies and increases to water security that could be realised through strategic MAR for drought resilience,
- Develop appropriate policy, accounting, and regulatory frameworks that enable MAR to be implemented fairly and transparently, and
- Establish well documented demonstration MAR sites in the Murray-Darling Basin.

Progressing the motion's objective, the MDA has engaged with the Basin State Water Ministers, as well as DELWP Secretary and Deputy Secretaries.

The MDA is awaiting further correspondence.

The John Kell Proposal (Motion 6.15)

This motion's objective was to commend the Federal Minister for the Environment, and relevant QLD and NSW Ministers to provide an update and the latest information on proposed new dams and changes to existing dams (including but not limited to) the modified Bradfield Scheme (the John Kell Proposal) and the Wyangala Dam.

Following ongoing correspondence with the CSIRO during, and after the 78th National Conference and AGM, the MDA has been provided with details regarding an [recently concluded webinar](#) on the CSIRO's Bradfield Scheme Assessment, as well as [additional information](#) regarding Bradfield Schemes.



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