



# 79<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting MINUTES

**Time: 3:30pm**

**Date: Thursday, 28 September 2023**

**Location: Murray Bridge Performing Arts & Function Centre,  
17 Bridge St, Murray Bridge SA 5253**

**Murray Darling Association Incorporated**  
ABN 64 636 490 493

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# 1. Welcome

## 1.1 Welcome Address

**Cr David Thurley, OAM**

*MDA National President*

# 2. Attendance

## 2.1 Present

<b>Delegate</b>	<b>Council</b>	<b>Region</b>
Cr David Thurley, <b>Chair R1, National President</b>	AlburyCity Council	Region 1
Cr Jason Modica, <b>Chair R4</b>	Mildura Rural City Council	Region 4
Cr Andrew Kassebaum, <b>Chair R5</b>	Berri-Barmera Council	Region 5
Cr Airlie Keen, <b>Chair R6</b>	Rural City of Murray Bridge	Region 6
Cr Andrew Tilley, <b>Chair R7</b>	City of Mitcham	Region 7
Cr Glen Andrezza, <b>Chair R9</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (Proxy) Mayor Ruth McRae</li><li>• (Proxy) Cr Jenny Clarke OAM</li><li>• (Proxy) Mayor Anthony Reneker</li></ul>	Griffith City Council	Region 9
Mayor Craig Davies, <b>Chair R10A, Vice-President</b>	Narromine Shire Council	Region 10A
Mayor Jamie Chaffey, <b>Chair R11</b>	Gunnedah Shire Council	Region 11
CEO Matthew Magin (PROXY)	Balonne Shire Council, Chief Executive Officer	Region 12
Peter George, <b>Treasurer</b>	M&S Group	Treasurer
CEO Mark Lamb	MDA, Chief Executive Officer	Staff
Tim Phillips	MDA, Comms & Engagement Officer	Staff
Andrew Lawson	AlburyCity Council	Region 1
Bradley Ferris	AlburyCity Council, Deputy Chief Executive Officer	Region 1
Mayor Shane Sali	Greater Shepparton City Council	Region 2
Cr Aaron Nicholls	Federation Council	Region 2
Mayor Simone Bailey	Mid Murray Council	Region 5
Mayor Ella Winnall	Berri Barmera Council	Region 5
Deputy Mayor Margaret Howie	Renmark-Paringa Council	Region 5
Cr Victoria Hammond	Mid Murray Council	Region 5
Deputy Mayor John Forrester	Mid Murray Council	Region 5
Cr Brenton Qualmann	Coorong District Council	Region 6
Mayor Wayne Thorley	Rural City of Murray Bridge	Region 6
Cr Milli Livingston	Alexandrina Council	Region 6
Cr Michael Scott	Alexandrina Council	Region 6
Cr Blake Lawrenson	City of Tea Tree Gully	Region 7

Peter Shepherd	Individual Member	Region 7
Pauline Frost	Life Member	Region 7
Lynda Yates	Individual Member	Region 7
John Scarce	Murrumbidgee Council, General Manager	Region 9
Paul Porter	Hay Shire Council	Region 9
Cr Michele Herbert	Forbes Shire Council	Region 10
Cr Brian Mattiske	Forbes Shire Council	Region 10
Cr Chris Roylance	Forbes Shire Council	Region 10
Cr Greg Sauer (Virtual)	Tenterfield Shire Council	Region 11
Mark Byrne (Virtual)	Armidale Regional Council	Region 11
Cr David Coulton (Virtual)	Gwydir Shire Council	Region 11
Tony Koch (Virtual)	Paroo Shire Council	Region 12

## 2.2 Apologies

Delegate	Council	Region
Cr Geoff Dobson, <i>Chair R2</i>	Greater Shepparton City Council	Region 2
Cr Tim Elstone	Wentworth Shire Council	Region 4
Cr Steve Heywood	Wentworth Shire Council	Region 4
Mayor Daniel Linklater	Wentworth Shire Council	Region 4

## 2.3 Declarations of Interest

Nil.

## 3. Confirmation of Previous Minutes

Refer to Attachment 3

### **CARRIED (A Tilley/A Kassebaum)**

**That the minutes of 78<sup>th</sup> MDA Annual General Meeting held on 21 September 2022 be accepted as an accurate record.**

## 4. 2022 - 2023 Annual Report and Financial Statements

Refer to Attachment 4

The Treasurer, P George, noted the supplied Financial Report and acknowledged the tireless efforts of MDA CEO M Lamb and T Phillips.

L Yates queried the noted depreciation within the report.

P George indicated that some depreciation was software depreciations. Noted Motor vehicles that were no longer owned by the Association. P George indicated that that was not an expense that the MDA needed.

P George indicated that with the decrease in MDA staff, the MDA needed fewer IT equipment.

**CARRIED (G Andreazza/J Chaffey)**

**That the 2022 – 2023 Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31 March 2022 be received and noted.**

**CARRIED (G Andreazza/J Chaffey)**

**That the Murray Darling Association engage Warren Pollock as Auditor for the next financial year.**

## 5. Motions on Notice

### Motion 5.1

### REDUCTION OF FERAL ANIMAL POPULATIONS

#### *Region 1*

D Thurley reviewed the Motion raised by Region 1, noting the motivation of the motion was the significant damage caused by feral animals in the Kosciuszko National Park.

C Davies noted an error in the first part of the Motion with the identified Minister.

A Keen noted that she was speaking against the Motion. Indicated that she appreciated the need to manage numbers. A Keen indicated that she did not know enough regarding the Kosciuszko National Park heritage Act to comment on that.

A Keen referenced the wording in the motion, seemed to suggest aerial culling, noted that many means were supported, but not aerial culling due to high cost to councils and the animal carcasses that would be left in the environment. Noted the risk of introducing a *Rules for thee but not for me* that could come of this, referencing duck hunting bans for communities.

D Thurley noted that aerial culling was not mentioned in the Motion.

A Kassebaum proposed an amendment to the Motion. Proposed the removal of "Rapid."

D Thurley confirmed the amended Motion.

L Yates proposed an amendment to the Motion. Proposed the removal of "as quickly as possible."

D Thurley noted that "as quickly as possible" did not identify or condone aerial culling.

D Thurley opened the Motion to a vote.

M Lamb identified 15 votes for, 11 votes against.

J Chaffey queried whether proxy votes were included in the count.

P Frost queried whether Life Members have a vote.

M Lamb confirmed that Life Members held one vote.

#### **CARRIED (D Thurley/B Ferris)**

#### **The member Councils of Region 1 move that:**

- 1. The NSW Minister for the Environment, the Hon Penny Sharpe repeal the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018, or make such amendments that would allow a reduction in the number of feral horses in the national parks, and**
- 2. The Federal Minister for the Environment, the Hon Tanya Plibersek, the NSW Minister for the Environment, the Hon Penny Sharpe, the Victorian Minister for the Environment, the Hon Ingrid Stitt MP, and the ACT Minister for the Environment, the Hon Shane Rattenbury take such steps as necessary to reduce the number of feral animals, including, but not limited to, deer and horses, as quickly as possible.**

#### **Key Arguments:**

##### ***What is the current context/issue?***

The feral horse population in Kosciuszko National Park has increased to almost 19,000 in Spring 2022 as a result of high rainfall and abundant feed and there has been a similar increase in the population of deer. Grazing pressure and damage caused by their hooves threatens the survival of alpine plants and animals, including endangered species such as the mountain pygmy possum, mountain skink and corroboree frog, as well as the sphagnum moss and ferns at the headwaters of the Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers.

A Nicholls spoke on the Motion, noted that the Motion was extensive. Referenced the specific impact on his council (Federation Council) where facilities were unusable for weeks due to the floods.

**CARRIED (D Thurley/B Ferris)**

1. That MDA Region 1 encourage the Basins Officials Committee (BOC) to give the MDBA direction on how to use the last 386GL of airspace in Hume Dam to provide meaningful flood mitigation to downstream communities. (The BOC is the vehicle for giving direction to the MDBA).
2. That in forecast wet years, the MDBA predict inflows on the basis of flows that can be reasonably expected and not use the current serially correlated flow regime which uses historic lows from a given point in time.
3. That the MDBA give heavy weighting to short term BoM forecasts.
4. That the MDBA negotiate with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEHW) to underwrite any airspace not recovered after pre-releasing during flood operations.

**Background:**

Hume Dam is currently operated under three pillars of governance.

1. Protect the structure at all costs.
2. Store as much water as possible.
3. Provide flood mitigation where possible.

Unfortunately, the MDBA treat pillars 2 and 3 above as being mutually exclusive. Under current rules the last 386GL (12.8%) of airspace at Hume Dam can be used for flood mitigation but this volume is not being utilised. For example, in 2016 where the Murray Valley experienced catastrophic flooding Hume dam was allowed to fill to 98% and went from minimum releases of 600ML/day to releases of 45,000ML/day 10 days later, and it kept getting worse from there. This was despite BoM short term forecasts predicting huge rainfall totals over the catchment. Hume was essentially allowed to fill and spill, and catastrophic flooding occurred. Last year when Hume was 97% full in July the same thing happened yet MDBA officials said that Hume was not guaranteed of filling despite every climate model in existence forecasting extremely wet La Nina conditions. Over the next four months over two times the total volume of Hume dam was passed as floodwater resulting in extreme damage to property in the Murray Valley through to South Australia.

Serially correlated flow calculations by their very nature will always underestimate inflows i.e. inflows will always be greater than what is allowed for. If you don't have a realistic expectation of what is coming in, how can you manage what needs to be let out?

In wet years the MDBA discount BoM forecasts because 'they might be wrong' but in dry years they follow BoM forecasts to the letter. It begs the question as to who within the MDBA thinks they have a better ability than the BoM to forecast weather events. In wet years the MDBA need to give heavy weighting to BoM forecasts.

When on the odd occasion the MDBA does consider Hume will fill and decides to pre-release water in advance of inflows this pre-releasing is always conservative because they always want to guarantee filling after an event. Pre-releasing is generally considered good for the environment and this water does not come off any environmental water account. If the CEWH was prepared to underwrite say 5% of airspace, then if Hume did not fill after releasing mitigating flows before demand exceeded inflows then that % shortfall would come off the CEWH's water account. This would give river operators significant wriggle room to provide some meaningful flood mitigation to downstream communities whilst also providing significant environmental outcomes through the pre-releasing process. CEWH has in the past has shown some appetite for this concept.

## **Motion 5.3      DEVELOPMENT DELIVERY UNREGULATED GROWTH AND THE COST OF THE NEXT DROUGHT**

### **Region 4**

J Modica noted that following discussions over the recent days, noted that he supported this motion and hoped that others would do likewise.

J Chaffey requested a count of votes For and Against the Motion.

D Thurley opened the Motion to a count of votes.

M Lamb identified 19 votes For, 11 Against.

J Modica requested clarification on whether he could be a proxy for councils of Region 4 who were unable to attend.

D Thurley affirmed that Proxy rights were available.

C Davies noted that Proxies were lodged before the AGM commenced. Noted that this late inclusion of proxies during the AGM should not be accepted. Noted that current identified proxies were made aware of to the CEO prior to the commencement of the AGM.

R Webb noted that the Constitution noted that a Proxy must be given in writing prior to the Meeting.

J Modica acknowledged the identified proxy requirements.

#### **CARRIED (J Modica/A Kassebaum)**

**For the Murray Darling Association to call on the Federal and State Environmental Ministers to confirm the scientific commitment to reach the target of 3200GL of water in the environmental account.**

#### **Objective:**

Increasing the health of waterways in the driest years of the Murray Darling Basins (MDA) ephemeral cycle. To acknowledge the hyper political nature of returning water to the Murray Darling Basin for the purpose of increasing overall Murray Darling Basin Health and acknowledging the economic cost of climate change fuelled droughts.

To acknowledge the extraordinary growth of crops planted in the Murray Darling Basin from the year 2000. To analyse this growth on the back of the Water Act of 2007 and pre amendment Basin Plan and their premise to protect, preserve and rejuvenate waterways in the Murray Darling Basin. To navigate a way through the next drought whilst acknowledging the colonial boom and bust cycle in the Murray Darling Basin. Creating options to reduce the overall negative outcomes associated with drought while bringing health back to our rivers and waterways with considered regulation and transparency.

When the original pre amendment target of 3200 GL is met there would be an overall environmental benefit through achieving the goals of the Water Act and Basin Plan. Flow and connectivity would follow then community and amenity benefit with the overall goal of sustainable waterways coexisting with healthy working River's supporting horticulture and agriculture. Revision of previous droughts and how devastating they have been for water reliant industries would give industry legislatures and communities an opportunity to view the vulnerable position many towns and industries are already in regarding water availability and deliverability. The potential shortfall in water supply already exists today before cyclical droughts begin to challenge towns communities and businesses in the Murray Darling Basin.

#### **Key Arguments:**

There would be an overall environmental and ecological benefit initially, then community and amenity benefit with the overall goal of sustainable waterways coexisting with healthy working Rivers and sustainable horticulture and agriculture.

#### **What is the current context/issue?**

Water privatization and commodification driven by unbundling of land from water has deconstructed the importance of non-consumptive water in River Systems and on flood plains. This generated a



Goldrush/Water rush mentality diminishing the centrality of water availability for the commons. The debate on water has centred on wealth gain and protection rather than ecological system protection and rehabilitation. From 1997 to 2018, the irrigable area in the Mallee catchment increased by 40,825 hectares, from 40,325 hectares to 81,150 hectares.

The pace of development has continued to increase since data was collected.

In 2000, Australia had approximately 3,546 hectares (ha) of almond tree plantations. By 2019, the rapid expansion of this industry had increased almond-growing land to 53,014 ha – a 900% rise in less than 20 years. Mildura and surrounding districts hold 328GL of Permanent water but require close to 600 GL to water all permanent plantings which is purchased from the temporary market. This position is precarious in low intake years, and it would be an unmitigated disaster in drought. Noting that Almonds Australia called for a moratorium on new plantings in 2019.

This growth mantra and politicized decision making within the Murray Darling Basin is evidenced in the 2018 decision of the Federal Government to return 70GL of Water allocated to the environment back to the market. Politically ignoring the premise of the Water Act the pre amendment Murray Darling Basin Plan and the hydrological needs of the Basin.

A reduction of the volume of permanent and perennial plantings in the Basin needs deep consideration as we move into a dry cycle. With greater value placed on flow connectivity and the protection of the Murray Darling Basin's natural assets.

#### ***What are the risks of this motion doesn't get up?***

With the Murray Darling Basin predominately wet from very large floods developers and investors can underestimate how devastating a Millennium sized drought could be. The Millennium drought is a stark reminder of the ephemerality of the River's in the Murray Darling Basin and the ongoing waltz between flood and drought.

The clear risk if this motion does not get up is that the result of unregulated growth of horticultural and agricultural plantings will need water in the middle of a Millennium style drought. Water will be unavailable to potentially up to 50% of all water holders (allocations went under 50% during the Millennium Drought). The economic reality of this downturn will be immeasurable. It could create a wealth transference within the Murray Darling Basin never witnessed before. We will be left with a few commodities who can afford water and those who only have the option to sell. We have lived this before and somehow the reality of the limited water in the Murray Darling Basin periodically is ignored. The financial cost of drought and drought recovery for businesses makes a mockery of the reason for unbundling water initially. Increasing water needs overlapping with decreasing water availability will only ever present a shortfall. This outcome will be devastating for community's environment horticulture and agriculture.

A deeper consideration of the history of the Water Act and the Murray Darling Basin plan provided at the 2019 South Australian Royal Commission. The 2020 NSW ICAC report into Water Management and Compliance and the Citizens inquiry into the Health of the Darling/Barka River and Menindee Lakes could help alleviate manage and prepare for the next drought potentially exacerbated by the climate change.

[NSW Government - allegations concerning management of water in NSW and systemic noncompliance with the Water Management Act 2000 \(Operations Avon and Mezzo\) - Independent Commission Against Corruption](#)

[Department for Environment and Water - Murray-Darling Basin Royal ...](#)

Investigation-into-complaints-of-corruption-in-the-management-of-water-in-nsw-and-systemic-noncompliance-with-the-water-management-act-2000-Avon\_Nov2020.pdf

[2019 Citizens' Inquiry - Australian Peoples' Tribunal](#)

#### ***What is the broader benefit to Basin communities if this motion is successful?***

The broader benefits of this motion would be the ongoing health and longevity of Murray Darling Basin communities and working Rivers operating within the ecological parameters of ephemerality and variable intakes, providing consistency to horticulture and agriculture outside of the historic boom bust cycle. With consideration of climate change, climate change mitigation actions and the pressure of unregulated growth.

MINUTES TO BE CONFIRMED AT THE 80TH AGM

**CARRIED (J Modica/A Kassebaum)**

**The Executive Members of Murray Darling Association Region 4 request that the State and Federal NSW Labor Governments follow through on their commitment to rebuild the Wilcannia Weir and call on the State and Federal Labor Governments and relevant identified Ministers to complete the new weir.**

**Objective:**

To have the NSW government honour their commitment to the people of Wilcannia and broader Barwon Darling region and people. To improve water quality, to enhance cultural connection to the river, to improve water management of the weir pool, to increase tourism opportunities and investment, better recreational amenity to walk picnic and fish. To improve native fish passage.

The community of Wilcannia would benefit from the construction of the promised new Weir. To improve water quality, to enhance cultural connection to the river, to improve water management of the weir pool, to increase tourism opportunities and investment, better recreational amenity to walk picnic and fish. To improve native fish passage.

To have the weir completed. Which will intern increase the weir pool to supply 9 months of clean water well above the 5 months storage the old Weir provides. To promote fish passage and connectivity on the Darling River. To bring amenity and access to all who live along the river.

**Key Arguments:*****What is the current context/issue?***

The funding for the weir was first announced by Niall Blair and David Littleproud in 2018. The re-affirmed by Melinda Pavey in 2021.

The current Wilcannia Weir was built in the 1942 and refurbished in 1988. It was originally built of concrete and timber. It has no fish ladder, is technologically redundant and has served its original purpose. The community have been waiting patiently to have the new structure completed form the first funding announcement in 2018. The new weir would benefit the town and assist in the management of water supply.

***What are the risks of this motion doesn't get up?***

There are huge risks that this upgrade will be overlooked and pushed into the future for many reasons. This explores and exposes the out of site out of mind reality Western NSW suffer from when it comes to water, water infrastructure upgrades and funding. The original Niall Blair promise is fading into the past rapidly. An assurance from the Federal and NSW Government that this Weir is completed would show that Western NSW is not the forgotten region of the Murray Darling Basin.

***What is the broader benefit to Basin communities if this motion is successful?***

To complete the promised upgrade of the Wilcannia Weir would assist in bringing attention to the stresses Wilcannia has undergone over the last 10 years. It would ensure a first world quality of water, supply safe passage of fish through a connected Darling Barwon River system. The potential for economic development and growth is There is also the potential to bring attention to the lack of water flowing through the very small Western NSW Towns of Wilcannia and Menindee.

[Wilcannia Weir updated fact sheet \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/wilcannia-weir)

**CARRIED (J Modica/A Kassebaum)**

**That The Murray Darling Association writes to Federal Water Minister Tanya Plibersek and NSW Water Minister, Rose Jackson, seeking urgent implementation of all recommendations from the NSW Natural Resources Commission in relation to Long Term Average Annual Extraction Limits, per Issues Briefs 1 and 2 (attached).**

**Objective:**

The one consistently missing action in water management across NSW has been the setting of extraction limits, required under the Water Act 2007 (Cth) to protect the water source as well as downstream communities, stock and domestic and town water quality and availability.

In March the Natural Resources Commission released Issues Briefs on consistent issues in water management - notably the lack of Long Term Average Annual Extraction Limits which must be set in each Water Sharing Plan and still have not been.

Unless and until NSW introduce LTAAELs (beginning with areas at high risk of currently being above sustainable limits), the Darling-Baaka will continue to miss out on the low- and moderate floods it used to enjoy and compounding water scarcity issues like recent fish kills, low dissolved oxygen and high nutrient levels (including nitrogen and phosphorous) will continue the demise of the "...ecosystem in crisis" as the Darling-Baaka was described by NRC in 2019.

Without LTAAELs, water management is a guessing game, and one easily skewed against protection of the water source, to the detriment of many important wetlands and especially end of system regions like Wilcannia, Menindee and Wentworth Shire.

**Key Arguments:**

There can be no way of ensuring NSW is compliant under the Basin Plan without extraction limits, nor can projections be based on best available science - all water management depends on a number describing the limit of extraction which will ensure future sustainability. If that number needs to be reviewed, as it must annually, better planning and surety can be provided to industry, communities and first nations, so water is shared as it should, in a sustainable way into the foreseeable future.

2. Incorporate within water resource plans and water sharing plans the ability to suspend low priority extraction, such as Supplementary, Floodplain and High Flow licences until such time as end of system (Wentworth Darling Junction) flow connectivity and water quality parameters are met;

3. Prioritise end of system water quality and equity by increasing the amount of water meters and including water quality meters along the Barwon-Darling river and;

4. Reexamine the principals of the North West Flow plan to achieve immediate gains in the health of our river systems, given the dire forecast for blue green algae events this Spring and Summer.

[Interim Unregulated Flow Management Plan for the North-West \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/interim-unregulated-flow-management-plan-for-the-north-west)

Note the following from the document drafted in 1992:

The proposals in this Interim Plan will establish:

- target flows along the Barwon-Darling River and priorities for river health and riparian flows;
- a basis for sharing unregulated flows between irrigators and better control of extractions;
- improved monitoring and research programs; and
- an advisory committee and a performance reporting process.
- [Menindee-Fish-Deaths-Report Findings-and-Recommendations.pdf \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)
- [Issue brief 1 - Numeric extraction limits \(2\).pdf](#)

MINUTES TO BE CONFIRMED AT THE 80TH AGM

A Keen queried how many Members were in attendance online.

M Lamb confirmed that there were four members in attendance online.

**CARRIED (A Keen/J Modica)**

**That the MDA advocates for the Murray Darling Basin Plan 2.0 to address meeting water demands with less water.**

**Objective:**

To assess the stressors of

- Climate Change and the predicted reduction in rainfall
- Extremely variable rainfall predictions, leading to more droughts
- Increasing population growth drawing on MDB water
- Increasing agricultural demand (to meet the 100 billion dollar production target by 2030)

To continue to deliver these water demands

- A minimum 1850 GL/2750 GL to SA and total current water demands across the MDB
- A minimum 450 GL to SA

Or suffer significant impacts on

- Sea water incursion
- Meeting sufficient water for
  - Human needs
  - Cultural demands
  - Environment
  - Agricultural production and
  - Mining

**What is this motion trying to achieve?**

Consolidate and reinforce previous motions, and seek support from other SA entities, via Regional Development Australia, Murraylands and Riverland LGA, and Southern & Hills LGA, including the reinforcement of the importance of climate change in the review of the basin plan.

To understand the likely MDB flows into the future and how they could be allocated if the same low flows (over the last 20 years) are maintained. Water flows into the River Murray over the past 20 years are nearly half their 20th-century average of 9407 GL per year, down to an average of just 4820 GL per year. In a changing climate, communities throughout the Basin will need continued assistance to adjust to a future with less water.

To ensure that previous MDA motions relating to the MDBA Basin Plan 2.0 are an ongoing priority for river health and continue to reflect the concerns of Basin communities.

**Background:**

Motions from 2021 and 2022 relating to the Basin Plan review -

**2022 Motion 6.6:**

Effects of sea-level rise. 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 Murray-Darling Basin Plan Review and the updated Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

**2021 Motion 5.8**

2. Identify options for climate change preparedness to help councils adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

3. Prepare for the development and implementation of Basin Plan 2.0.

**Background and supporting information:**

Refer to Motions 6.6 and 6.8, 2022 MDA AGM Motions.

**Key Arguments:**

***What is the current context/issue?***

There are multiple increasing reasons for reduced water in the Murray Darling Basin, whilst demand is growing, creating even more significant impacts if insufficient Murray Darling water is available. These include the reduced rainfall due to climate change, allowing the effects of predicted sea-level rise to the Lower Murray and making meeting the 450 GI target more complex. All these must be built into the current Basin Plan, extended to 2027, and the Basin Plan 2.0 review.

***What are the risks of this motion doesn't get up?***

The reviewed Basin plan needs to compensate for less rainfall, and guarantee flows through the barrages to push seawater out. Suppose the review does not consider these issues properly. In that case, the downstream Basin communities will be harshly impacted by seawater incursion or not meeting water for environmental, cultural and human needs.

***What is the broader benefit to Basin communities if this motion is successful?***

That the correct water allocation to downstream communities provides surety for future uses.

A Keen spoke on and reviewed the Motion.

J Chaffey queried whether there could be more clarity on the Motion. Noted he was personally not in favour of membership changing through Riparian Membership.

A Keen noted that this was not about a reduced membership rate, but rather boosting the Association's membership and boosting financial stability.

**CARRIED (A Keen/A Tilley)**

**MDA to build on the policy and position materials to establish the value proposition of MDA membership, particularly to non-riparian Councils.**

**Objective:**

***What is this motion trying to achieve?***

To increase membership of communities and Regions that source their industrial, agricultural, and human needs water from the River Murray (in SA), such as the Adelaide, Eyre Peninsula and Southeast of South Australia.

***Who would benefit from this motion?***

The MDB communities with full membership of areas outside the MDB provide a better reflection of the water demands on the Murray – Darling. The MDA receives more credibility from the wider catchment and politically.

**Background:**

Many communities, including those outside the Murray Darling Basin, benefit from the waters of the River Murray; however, they are not members of the MDA, possibly because they do not see themselves as “river communities” and are outside the MDB.

**Key Arguments:**

Communities, Councils and MDA Regions in South Australia (7 & 8) outside the MDB that source their water from the River Murray are as dependent on the River Murray as any community inside the MDB. Their uses include mining, industrial, agriculture and human needs. Mining, for example, is the biggest user of River Murray water in South Australia, yet maintains no presence, from SA, in the MDA and offers no support to the efforts of the MDA and other Councils to sustain the flows in the River. This supply can be taken for granted due to their distance from the River.

Membership from these multiple groups would help the political efforts to maintain the water supply.

***What are the risks if this motion doesn't get up?***

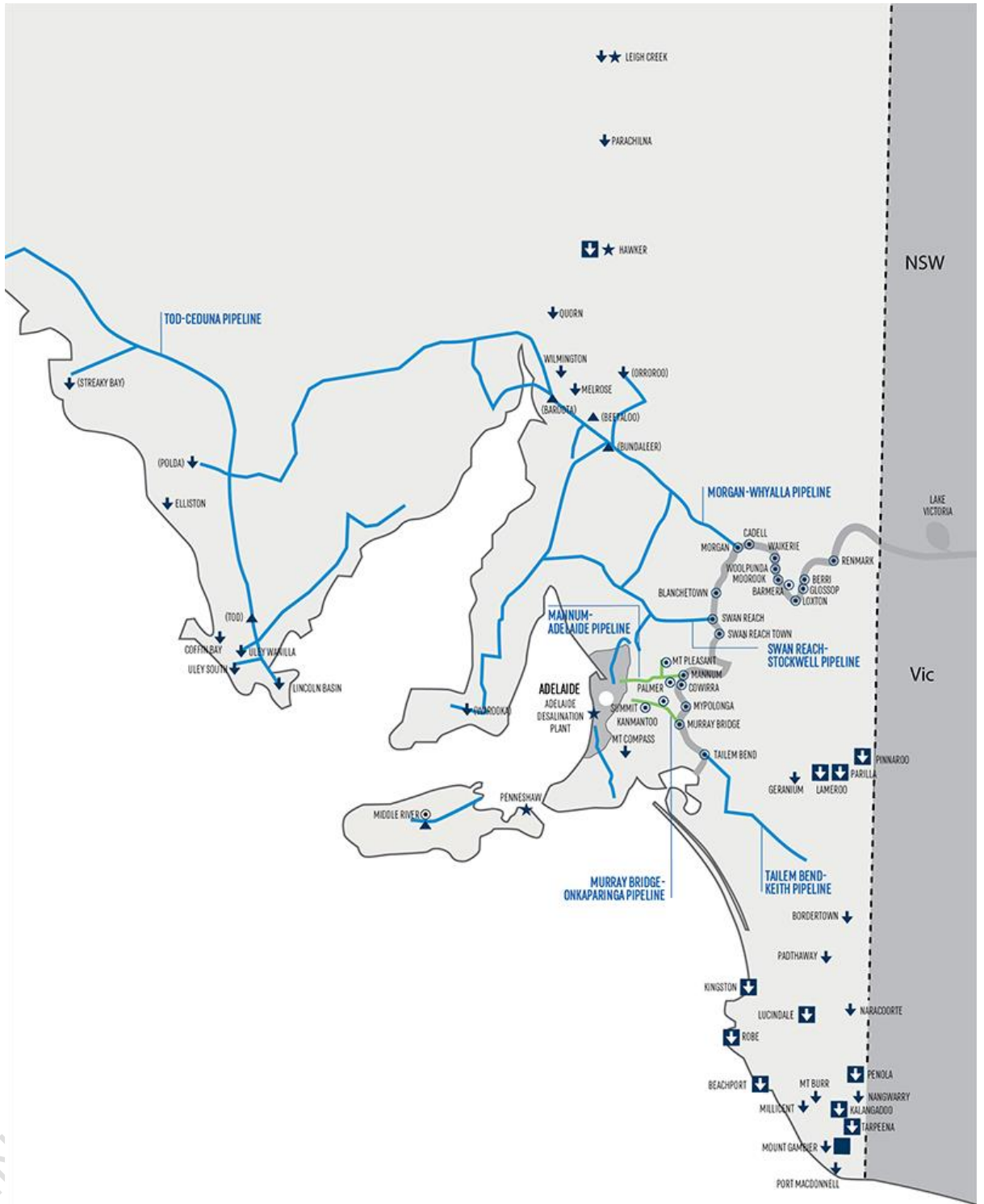
The total number of people who rely on River Murray water is much greater than those inside the MDB who contribute most of the political effort to deliver a sustained and working River.

***What is the broader benefit to Basin communities if this motion is successful?***

Greater understanding throughout the MDB of the water demands of users and uses than what is limited to within the MDB.



MIN.



## Motion 5.8 REDUCTION OF RIVER WATER RELIANCE FOR NON-RIPARIAN COUNCILS

Region 6

A Keen reviewed the Motion, noted that this motion was about more flexibility to release funds to decrease council reliance on SA Water.

### **CARRIED (A Keen/A Tilley)**

**To release funds to non-riparian Local Governments for engineering solutions to reduce reliance on the Murray-Darling Basin.**

**For example, the Off-Farm Efficiency Program is only available where a water licence exists, and water can be returned directly to the River. However, many Councils utilise SA Water from the River Murray but still need a water license to use the program.**

### **Objective:**

To release funds quarantined for River Murray Licence holders for any user of River Murray water to improve Local Government's ability to reduce reliance on piped, potable, and River Murray water for township use, such as watering reserves and parks and managing stormwater to expand vegetation and biodiversity through Water Sensitive Urban Design and Stormwater capture and reuse schemes.

This motion makes all Australian communities more resilient in the face of Climate Change.

### **Who would benefit from this motion?**

Basin Communities and the Environment.

### **Background:**

The Off-Farm Efficiency Program is closed, with large amounts of untapped money available, with very few funded projects in operation and many mega-litres of water savings to be exploited.

### **Key Arguments:**

Only Local Governments with a water licence can access the Off-Farm Efficiency Program funds to improve water efficiency and reduce their reliance on the River Murray. However, many users who use River Murray water through the SA Water supply (and similar elsewhere) could also use these funds and reduce the draw on the Murray Darling Basin.

### **What is the current context/issue?**

Regional Councils are in an excellent position to improve the quality and quantity of water in the River and their environment. However, they need more resources and knowledge to implement the best options. Both are in much greater abundance in the City Councils.

### **What are the risks of this motion doesn't get up?**

The situation remains normal and unchanged, and funding bodies do not appreciate opportunities. Regional Councils should be seen in a different light than City Councils, with a greater ratepayer base, smaller area, and little public land to manage.

### **Background and supporting information:**

**Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD):** Stormwater is rainwater that falls onto roads or roofs and often contains chemicals, sediment, or pollutants. Water sensitive urban design (WSUD) is an approach to planning and designing urban areas to use this valuable resource and reduce the harm it causes to our rivers and creeks.

WSUD is expanding significantly in City councils through education, resources, knowledge, and awareness of the impacts of stormwater on rivers and the sea from sediment, chemicals, and nutrients.

WSUD is not widely adopted in regional Councils due to the need to understand the gains that can be made through its implementation. These include reducing pollution to receiving waters, reducing stress on stormwater infrastructure, allowing more vegetation, trees, and biodiversity, and using

water where it falls rather than pumping, watering, and managing stormwater where no drainage infrastructure exists. The other impediment is knowledge by civil infrastructure staff, engineers, and planners to look for opportunities and what works best for a particular situation.

Regional Local Governments need opportunities to learn about WSUD, costs, benefits, applications, and outcomes to use this technology in their townships. Funded training through WaterSensitiveSA and similar groups and on-the-job uses would go a long way to progressing its use. This is the experience of the Rural City of Murray Bridge, which now uses WSUD to increase vegetation, solve troublesome stormwater problems and reduce the draw on the River Murray.

**Stormwater Harvesting and Reuse:** Harvesting stormwater for reuse through an existing reticulated network is a way of drought-proofing a township during dry periods and expanding the park and reserve network by making more water available throughout the year. These are much larger infrastructure projects requiring significant engineering, treatment, and distribution works and, therefore, need State and Australian government funding to be possible. On this scale, townships can significantly improve aesthetics, cool their urban locations with green areas not supported via existing networks, withstand predicted lower rainfall due to climate change, and directly contribute to achieving the outcomes of the MDB Plan.

A Keen noted that the recommendation originated from Tatiara Council. Noted that there is a rural community facing water scarcity issues, much as was heard during the Conference.

J Chaffey commended the Motion. Indicated that this Motion showed exactly what the MDA should be doing, advocate for each other across the states to ensure that employment opportunities and support communities.

#### **CARRIED (A Keen/J Chaffey)**

**Advocate for support and investment to extend the SA Water Mains Pipeline from Tailem Bend – Keith onto Bordertown to meet domestic water use requirements.**

#### **Objective:**

##### ***What is this motion trying to achieve?***

To guarantee water for human needs, domestic, business, and light industry use in the Bordertown township serving a population of 3000 to be taken from the existing SA Water country towns allocation.

This is not for irrigation or agricultural production.

#### **Background:**

The existing Bordertown water supply from six groundwater bores needs to be improved due to ongoing climate variability and reduced rainfall, reducing recharge, and replenishing the freshwater lens that supplies the town. The most reliable alternative water supply solution is an extension of the River Murray Tailem Bend to Keith pipeline, which currently terminates in the Brimbago and Cannawigara localities.

The estimated cost is \$43 million.

#### **Key Arguments:**

Ongoing water security for Bordertown is at risk due to declining recharge to the freshwater groundwater lens, which is the current town water supply. Providing this water security solution for Bordertown will match high-value River Murray water to essential human requirements.

##### ***What is the current context/issue?***

Based on modelling, more reliable and good quality water will be required to supply this community's domestic, business, and industrial use and will restrict ongoing growth.

Long-term reduced rainfall and flow in Tatiara Creek since the mid-1990s is decreasing the extent of recharge to the freshwater lens and increasing salinity levels. The aquifer supplying Bordertown water supply is not replenishing at a rate sufficient to respond to current and future demand levels.

##### ***What are the risks if this motion doesn't get up?***

The Bordertown township's domestic, business, and industrial water supply may soon decline below the World Health Organisation (WHO) standards for human consumption.

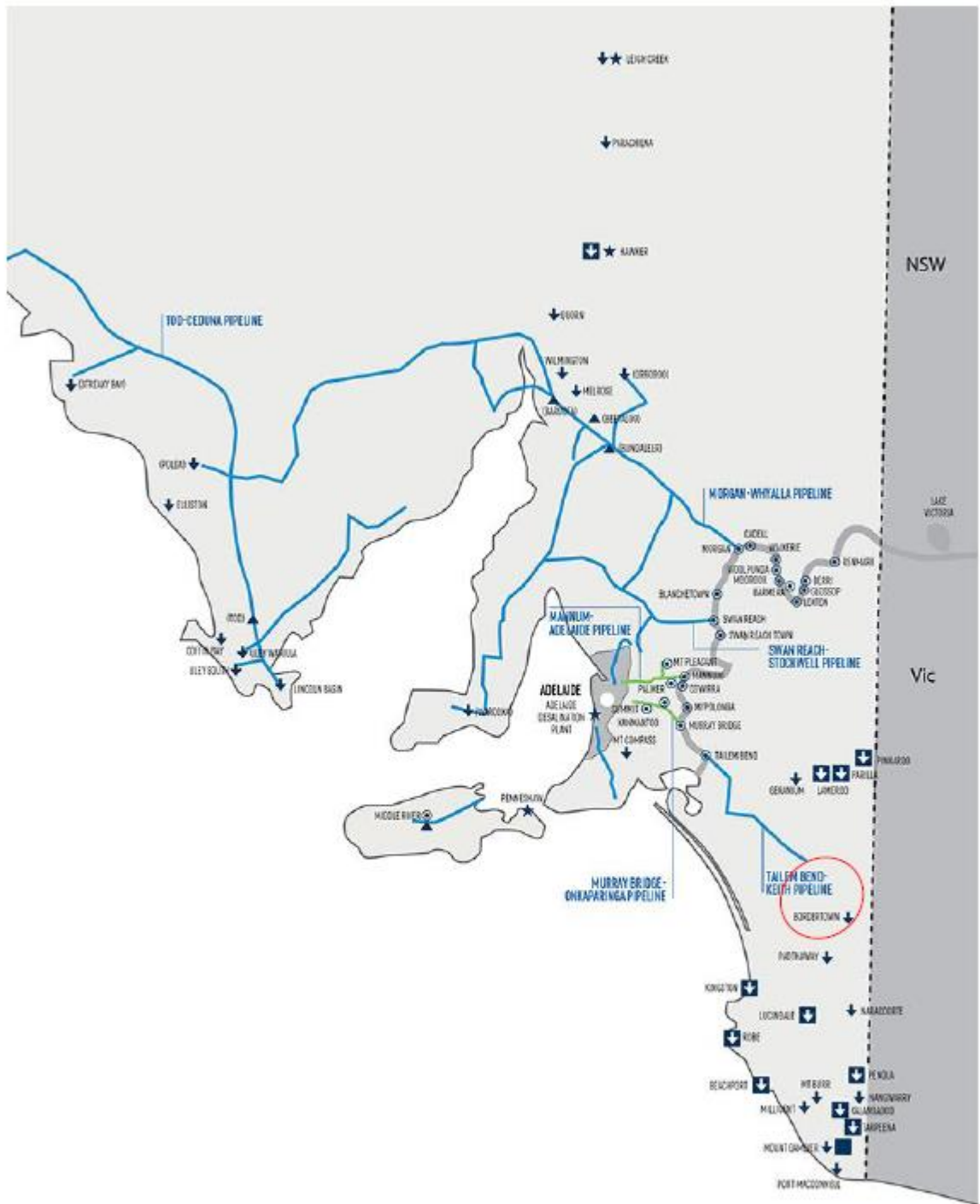
Alternate water supply solutions will not be explored.

##### ***What is the broader benefit to Basin communities if this motion is successful?***

Ongoing water security for Bordertown is ensured and will match high-value River Murray water to essential human requirements.

#### **Background and supporting information:**

- Tatiara District Council Community Investment Plan, Page 4 – Bordertown Water Supply
- Limestone Coast Landscape Board – Tatiara Water Allocation Plan Review



[SAWater - Our services](#)



Location of proposed pipeline extension

**CARRIED (A Keen/P Simmons)**

- a) That the MDA requests the National Water Infrastructure Grid and the Australian Government to fund opportunities for water efficiency using On-Farm Efficiency Funds.
- b) Opportunities to reduce demand on SA Water supplied water derived from the River Murray for Upper Southeast South Australia Stock and Domestic water use.

**Objective:**

Use the funds available for On-Farm Efficiency programs for users who do not access River Murray directly (using a water licence) but use SA Water potable water derived from the River Murray. As these communities and properties do not own a water licence, they are not eligible for these funds as they do not hold a water licence to trade back to the MDBA.

**Who would benefit from this motion?**

All Basin Communities and the River.

**Key Arguments:****What is the current context/issue?**

Significant unspent funds are available for water efficiency measures limited to those with water licences. However, many users access River Murray water via SA Water infrastructure, which could add water-saving infrastructure and reduce their demand on SA Water and the River Murray.

**What are the risks of this motion doesn't get up?**

That water loss continues unabated.

A Keen reviewed the Motion. Noted the Study Tour to the Coorong on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023. Referenced the hyper salinity in the Lakes. Noted that this does impact the whole of the Murray-Darling Basin with salinity potentially coming up the river system.

C Davies proposed an amendment. Proposed the removal of the reference to "SA", instead reference "in the Basin."

A Keen confirmed the amendment to the Motion.

#### **CARRIED (A Keen/A Tilley)**

**Region 6 Moves that the MDA write to the Federal Minister (and potentially the State Minister) to seek continued funding for the implementation of the Healthy Coorong, Healthy Basin program and opportunities for increased protection and financing of all Murray Darling Ramsar Wetlands in the Murray-Darling Basin.**

#### **Objective:**

To continue to improve the health of all Ramsar wetlands, including the Coorong and capitalise on the increased flows over the last 12 months, including but not limited to improvements to the Southern Lagoon and the Murray Mouth.

#### **Background:**

Global wetlands account for a third of all carbon sequestered. Without the health of these systems, climate change will worsen and impact the Murray Darling Basin. It makes sense to prioritise all wetlands in the MDB so they can increase carbon storage and mitigate and adapt to climate change. [Coorong Restoration Roadmap | YourSAy](#)

The SA Government completed a community engagement program in June 2023 on the draft Coorong Restoration Roadmap, which will guide how we implement a strategic restoration of the Coorong. The Coorong is a wetland of international importance and one of the most significant waterbird habitats in the Murray-Darling system. Despite its significance, the Coorong is suffering a long-term decline, which the Millennium Drought exacerbated.

To aid the Coorong's return to a desired healthy state, the Healthy Coorong, Healthy Basin (HCHB) program was developed to improve the Coorong's ecology, knowledge and management and get the region back on track for a healthy future. HCHB is a \$77 million commitment to restore a healthy Coorong, announced by the Australian and South Australian governments in December 2018

Since HCHB was announced in 2018, the program has completed the unprecedented Scientific Trials and Investigations (T&I) project, which identified knowledge gaps and has informed the development of targeted and effective management actions for the Coorong.

Guided by the [International Principles and Standards for the Practice of Ecological Restoration](#), the Coorong Restoration Roadmap presents how we will use our key findings and partner with scientists, communities and First Nations to implement a strategic restoration program for the Coorong.

#### **Key Arguments:**

[Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Ramsar Wetland - Fact sheet \(dcceew.gov.au\)](#)

The Murray River, Lower Lakes and Coorong are central to our region's way of life, and we know all too well from lived experience about the direct link between river health and our people's economic, social, and cultural well-being.

The Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Ramsar wetland is one of Australia's most important wetland areas. Australia designated the site, covering approximately 140,500 ha in South Australia, as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 1985. Parts of the Coorong also form the Coorong National Park and Game Reserve.

The site is a unique mosaic of 23 wetland types and provides habitat for nationally threatened species such as the Murray Cod. It contains the threatened Gahnia sedge land ecosystem and part of the endangered Swamps of the Fleurieu Peninsula. The area is used for professional and recreational fishing, camping, boating, walking, wildlife observation and research. There are extensive Aboriginal, historical, and geological sites. The Ngarrindjeri people maintain a close association with the area, and some of the northern islands within the Coorong lagoon are reserved for their use. Most of the edges of Lakes Alexandrina and Albert are used for farming.

Before adopting the Basin Plan, the unsustainable use and management of Basin water resources (combined with severe drought) devastated our community and local environment. The impacts of the Millennium Drought on our region are well documented elsewhere but included low water levels, elevated salinity, vast exposure of acid sulphate soils and localised acidification of surface waters, a problem that continues to have long-standing environmental impacts on our environment, especially the Ramsar wetlands, has needed significant investment from State and Federal Governments to continue to work toward resolving. In addition, what lake water there was became inaccessible or unusable for irrigation, whilst low water levels significantly impacted related industries and tourism.

Utilise wetlands as a climate change adaptation and mitigation strategy since global wetlands sequester one-third of global carbon. They act as a buffer for nutrient filtration and are also the key to the food web and ecology of the MDB.

#### ***What is the current context/issue?***

To ensure funding continues to be suitable to implement the Coorong Restoration Roadmap.

Water flows into the River Murray over the past 20 years are nearly half their 20th-century average of 9407 GL per year, down to an average of just 4820 GL per year. In a changing climate, communities throughout the Basin will need continued assistance to adjust to a future with less water. This is especially true for the Ramsar wetlands at the end of the Murray Darling Basin, which rely on the water delivered through the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

Like many other South Australian stakeholders, our concern for the Basin Plan is 'death by a thousand cuts'. The best available science tells us the benchmark 2750 GL recovery target will be insufficient to return the Ramsar wetlands of the Lakes & Coorong region to a sustainable level of health. Yet, we are facing several decisions in the coming months that are likely to reduce that figure even further – these include the Northern Basin Review, the SDL adjustment process and political pressure not to deliver the 450 GL of special account water.

Climate change will likely result in lower average rainfall patterns and more frequent and extreme droughts. CSIRO predicts that median river flows in the southern Murray Darling Basin will decline 13% by 2030.

Two measurement issues affecting the recovery of water for the environment of particular concern to our region are:

- (1) the impact of irrigation efficiency projects on return flows and hence net stream flows and whether these impacts are being adequately accounted for in determining how much water is being recovered for the environment;
- (2) the way that evaporation losses are accounted for across the Basin. South Australia's water allocation is determined and measured by river flows at the state border such that evaporative losses within South Australia are already accounted for within that allocation. We understand this is not the case in upstream states, where metering often occurs at the farm gate rather than at the initial off-take point from the river itself. A question for the Commission is how to meter the system to ensure that all diversions and associated evaporative losses are equitably and adequately accounted for.

#### ***What are the risks if this motion doesn't get up?***

Concerning environmental changes to date, our region is showing positive signs of ecological recovery due to improved environmental flows and the Coorong Lower Lakes Murray Mouth (CLLMM) Recovery Project outputs. The process of ecological recovery is, however, variable and continuing. Water quality quickly returned to pre-drought levels in Lake Alexandrina and the Goolwa Channel, especially after the



recent floods. However, this differs for Lake Albert and the Southern Lagoon of the Coorong, where salinity levels remained significantly higher than the pre-drought average. Since the 2023 flood, salinity levels are only now returning to their average state and allowing some recovery to the Southern Lagoon.

Key species (frogs, fish, water birds and *Ruppia tuberosa*) are only now recovering in abundance and distribution recorded before the Millennium Drought. Monitoring results indicate that continued recovery depends on future freshwater flows and a management approach that allows for seasonal water level changes in the lakes and additional barrage flows into the Coorong over spring and summer.

Ongoing advocacy of the Murray Darling Association for the end of systems recovery and improvement positively impacts upstream communities. For example, this region is a significant fish habitat and nursery. A healthy system means that upstream fisheries benefit from the fish that generally hatch in the ocean or in the Ramsar wetlands and migrate upstream (and vice versa). Hence, impacts on the Ramsar wetlands directly affect the economy of upstream communities.

Other risks are that the reduced flushing from salt accumulated across the Murray Darling Basin will directly impact the economy and health of all upstream communities.

***What is the broader benefit to Basin communities if this motion is successful?***

The water being returned to the River achieves significant benefits to the river's health and not being wasted.

As identified above, the Ramsar wetlands of the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth provide direct economic and health benefits across the Murray Darling Basin. Collectively, our four council districts cover an area of over 18,900 km<sup>2</sup> and are home to over 60,000 people, with a combined Gross Regional Product of \$2.77bn (as of the year ending June 2016). Agriculture is the region's largest industry, with livestock, cereal crops, vegetables, and grapes generating the greatest output in terms of value. Wool, dairy and broad-acre crops also significantly contribute to our agricultural productivity. Despite upstream misconceptions, water reaching the Ramsar wetlands of the Lower Lakes is productive water, with irrigated agricultural production accounting for approximately 10% of land use across the region. Tourism is another key driver of our regional economy, with food, wine and river-based experiences linking Adelaide with Melbourne via the Southern Ocean Drive and linking the Murray Mouth & Fleurieu Peninsula with upstream states via the Mighty Murray Way.

L Yates noted a required spelling correction amending “Levy” to “Levee.”

**CARRIED (A Keen/J Chaffey)**

**Region 6 moves that the MDA advocates to the Australian and State Governments to provide leadership, review levee bank management, and seek advice on what is proposed to implement regular assessment, maintenance, and enhancement of the levee bank system.**

**Objective:**

To ensure Government and Private Levees that protect towns and manage agricultural land for irrigation are assessed periodically (annually/biannually/five years?).

**Background:**

The 2022/2023 floods highlighted the need for all private and government levees to be assessed as fit for purpose to prevent breaches, as occurred to numerous levees along the Lower Murray.

**Key Arguments:**

Private levees along the River Murray were not fit for purpose as flood barriers and suffered breaches during the recent floods due to a lack of assessment and maintenance. During the Millennium drought, many levees lost their integrity. They may have yet to be repaired since then, so they are very susceptible to failure during the high flows and extra water pressure.

As of July 2023, all storages are full, and SA is under a High Flow Advice (>40 GI/day). Whilst flows were lower than before the recent floods, the high river was caused by one significant event in November that simultaneously flooded several Victorian Rivers.

***What is the current context/issue?***

Failure of the levees caused unnecessary flooding of land that took many months to dry out and then repair the levees for the future.

Private and public levees should be maintained to an acceptable standard when no risk exists.

***What are the risks of this motion doesn't get up?***

That river communities, relying on levees, will again be disadvantaged, and threatened if high river levels arrive.

**CARRIED (A Keen/M Magin)**

**The MDA calls on the State and Commonwealth Governments to provide leadership with quantifying the impact, management planning and amelioration fund to address riverbank slumping and river bank undercutting in impacted regions.**

**Objective:**

Murray Darling Basin communities require a Government Agency to take responsibility for the issues of riverbank slumping (SA) and riverbank undercutting (Vic).

To ensure riverine Local Governments and land managers adjacent to Rivers impacted by riverbank slumping and riverbank undercutting receive adequate support to quantify the impact, access quality technical information to inform management actions and access an amelioration fund to implement these actions.

A predictive risk assessment tool to understand the likelihood of future riverbank failure in conjunction with developing a management process to work through the best practice assessment, monitoring, and management of these areas.

**Background:**

Numerous mapped areas along the Lower River Murray are vulnerable to Riverbank Slumping, with devastating consequences during and since the Millennium Drought. The recent floods and predicted high flows are expected to increase riverbank slumping and undercutting. This damage may only become more apparent when river levels drop. Riverbank slumping into rivers can occur with no warning.

Riverbank slumping and undercutting impact public and private land and public facilities, private infrastructure, farmland, businesses, riverine management, habitat, the environment, and water quality.

In the Lower Murray region of South Australia, the riverbank as we know it is not the natural bank. The banks of the river are only 100 years old and were created when the lock/weir/barrage system was constructed. As such, some banks are not benefiting from thousands of years of consolidation. Some slumping occurs on human-constructed levies used to reclaim flood plains. These levees are constructed with the right intentions; however, geotechnical testing and correct compaction techniques cannot be verified.

In this case, slumping is simply the natural environment trying to reach an equilibrium. In the Upper reaches of the River Murray tributaries (Campaspe, Loddon, Broken and Goulbourn Rivers), Inter Valley Water Transfers undercut the riverbanks, causing the bank to fall into the fast-flowing water, damaging vegetation and habitat and unnaturally widening the Rivers.

**Key Arguments:**

Due to the recent events of the Millennium Drought and the 2022 – 2023 floods, riverbank slumping and undercutting are becoming increasingly common. The full impact and prevalence are not yet quantified.

Murray Darling Basin communities require a Government Agency to take responsibility for the issues of riverbank slumping and undercutting to ensure a consistent and coordinated approach.

A risk management and predictive tool to understand the likelihood of future riverbank failure in conjunction with developing a management process to work through the best practice assessment, monitoring, and management of these areas.

From a long-term view, riverine communities require support, technical advice, and funding assistance to adequately prepare these vulnerable riverine zones for future flood and drought events to be resilient to future damage.

***What is the current context/issue?***

Riverbank slumping and undercutting often occur in rural local government areas with low populations and rates-based income. This damage is anticipated and is yet to be factored into public or private land managers' long-term financial planning or insurance requirements. Damage impacts roads and public and private infrastructure, requiring technical engineering advice and solutions to mitigate and repair this damage.

***What are the risks of this motion doesn't get up?***

Without assistance with damage quantification, management actions and funding support, river communities, economies and businesses will continue to be impacted by future drought/flood cycles, leading to riverbank slumping and undercutting.

***What is the broader benefit to Basin communities if this motion is successful?***

River communities, economies, and businesses will be informed with a resilient position to protect riverbanks and adjacent infrastructure with the technical expertise to anticipate, assess and manage future riverbank slumping and undercutting occurrences.

**Background and supporting information:**

Lower Reaches River Murray Stability Risk Management Coorong District Council – Sinclair Knight Merz  
Riverbank Collapse Hazard, Lower Reaches River Murray Stability Risk Management – Jacobs SKM

**Objectives**

Identification of:

- A Government Agency to take responsibility for the issues of riverbank slumping and riverbank undercutting.

Development of:

- A predictive tool to understand the likelihood of future riverbank failure.
- A management process to work through best practice assessment, monitoring and managing these areas.
- An amelioration fund to address riverbank slumping and riverbank undercutting and protect areas identified at risk of these forms of river bank failure.

J Chaffey queried whether Region 6 consider a minor amendment to the Motion. Proposed change “Lower Murray Region” to “Basin Wide.”

A Keen confirmed the amended Motion.

**CARRIED (A Keen/J Forrester)**

**The MDA calls on the Federal Government to implement all other European Carp Control measures and develop a second plan to manage Carp.**

**Region 6 Moves that the MDA write to the Federal Minister**

- a) to seek advice on whether any non-biological European Carp Control measures could be implemented Basin wide and**
- b) to develop and deliver a Community-level Education Program Basin wide for ethical and responsible European Carp fishing and removal and**
- c) to provide funds for Local Councils to install fishing infrastructure and fish disposal methods in their local communities.**

**Objective:**

That the Australian Government takes an active approach to Carp management and implements alternative plans and control measures for managing Carp numbers, likely to increase post-flood, rather than waiting for the National Carp Control Plan to be ratified or rejected.

2021 Motion: The Murray Darling Association call on Basin Governments to initiate, fund and implement further research and development, adoption, and commercialisations into alternative carp mitigation/controls to the proposed Cyprinid Herpesvirus 3.

This benefits all Basin communities and the Environment.

**Background:**

From 2021 AGM: Carp's bulk harvest could support many market potentials, including but not limited to fertiliser, protein, human consumption, and international export. There is untapped export demand for our virus-free fish, with Carp considered a normal part of the diet in many countries across Europe and Asia.

By contrast, Carp as a table fish carries an unwarranted stigma in Australia. However, the Australian pallet is changing and targeted marketing and promoting Carp for human consumption, supported by appropriate preparation methods (e.g. catch and cooking techniques, pate', sausage rolls, fish patties, Mornay, etc.), would support a burgeoning domestic demand. Recreational anglers do not typically target carp, which can be a fantastic sport fish, a sector that could help support regional economies.

Could more work be done around community-level carp removal, education, disposal, and water-side fishing infrastructure and explore any viable commercial-level carp harvesting and disposal methods?

**Key Arguments:**

2021

The impact of the European Carp on Australia's river systems, including the Murray Darling Basin, is well documented, with the Federal Government implementing the National Carp Control Program in 2016. However, the Terms of Reference restricted the mitigation measures to the Cyprinid Herpes virus 3 with a follow-up of Daughterless Carp (genetic mitigation).

The Federal Government has spent millions of dollars researching its Carp Control Program, with little practical impact on the rivers and waterways. Whilst the government consternates its decision to release the Virus, hundreds of tonnes of Carp could be removed from the rivers and bred through

proven practical measures. Such as the introduction of "Daughterless Carp" to reduce the reproduction rate and increase the number of Carp Separation Cages at all river barriers, such as weirs and regulators.

The Williams' Carp Separation Cage (CSC Separation Cage) exploits the Carp's natural behaviour to migrate upstream and its willingness to jump small waterfalls, unlike our native fish. It is in use at the Blanchetown weir with great success following a trial period when it removed 300 tonnes of Carp. It now averages 80-100 t annually, allowing our native fish to continue upstream through Fishways. NSW DPI followed, using the CSC in several key locations, which supports a niche fertiliser industry with the potential to be replicated and scaled.

There are multiple circular economic opportunities also about Carp.

#### ***What is the current context/issue?***

2023

After completing the remaining research studies in 2022, Fisheries Research and Development Corporation submitted the National Carp Control Plan (NCCP) – an extensive and comprehensive body of work including 19 peer-reviewed research papers, nine technical papers and five further investigation studies.

The delivery of the NCCP is the initial stage of the process to consider the feasibility of any future release of the virus as a biocontrol agent for carp. All governments are considering the NCCP as part of an initial decision on whether to proceed with the biological release program. This is expected to take some time.

<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/pest-animals-and-weeds/national-carp-control-plan>

#### ***What are the risks of this motion doesn't get up?***

This motion seeks to implement other Carp control measures until the introduction of the virus.

There is considerable research on the National Carp Control Plan website, including biomass, commercial exploitation, clean-up and disposal, virus impacts, and water quality impacts. However, the NCCP does not include the use of cages, traps, or daughterless carp, so these options are available and should be exploited.

#### ***What is the broader benefit to Basin communities if this motion is successful?***

The NCCP and associated research include economic and environmental analysis on the outcomes of removing carp en-masse. Sudden removal (via the virus) could result in some loss of a food supply in the short term until local species recover.

Technical Paper 5 and NCCP research project 13 address potential socio-economic impacts on the native fish aquaculture industry, commercial carp fishers, recreational fishers, tourism, koi hobbyists and businesses, and possible mitigation measures in detail.

A Keen noted the final Motion from Region 6. Noted that personally believed there was possibility for real enhancement of the Constitution to ensure that the MDA remained robust and fit for purpose.

J Chaffey noted that the MDA had a long history. Noted it was great to see how many have such a great passion. Indicated that Region 11 had grown in past months. Noted that the Constitution was in need of change. J Chaffey proposed that first the MDA Board needed to hold a session to review the Constitution, followed by raising the reviewed amendments to the MDA Member base.

M Scott noted that there had been a lot of work done on the Constitution 4 – 5 years ago. Noted that it would be disappointing to see the work be done all over again.

A Keen noted that from her experience, the MDA was very comfortable on waiting the numbers. Noted that the MDA could easily be strengthened and streamlined and brought up to date. A Keen noted that this could feed into the financial stability, processes around becoming a member and answer questions on Riparian and Non-Riparian members. Noted an opportunity to review the structure of regions, questioned whether there was a need to have a Vice-President from both the North and South. A Keen expressed that a review of the Constitution could strengthen a weak document.

D Thurley noted that a review did not mean a change, but rather tweaking the Constitution. D Thurley indicated that he spoke in support of the Motion.

#### **CARRIED (A Keen/J Chaffey)**

**That the MDA Board review the Constitution for fairness, equity, good governance and to support ongoing financial sustainability.**

#### **Objective:**

Strategic Plan 2020-25: Pillar 4: Corporate Development

4.1.6 "Our Governance Framework is robust and reflects and supports our organisation's processes and accountabilities.

4.2.1 "Membership revenues are sufficient to fund recurrent business"

Given the important role and responsibility the MDA has over the next few years as the Basin Plan is reviewed, it is timely to ensure the governance framework is robust and fit for purpose, which should take the form of an all-encompassing root and branch review of:

The Constitution

Membership Policy

Membership Fees - Membership Application Form

Membership Procedure - Membership Code (the process to receive, consider and approve membership applications)

Life Members

Regional Boundary Review (viz Region 10 / 10A and non-participatory Regions)

Including the question over whether there should be a Non-Riparian Membership Discount for Councils in the Basin Supply Network (but not located on/near a Basin watercourse).

#### **Background:**

Some examples to support the review are:

- A private corporation of any size can join for \$350 (there are two large water utility members)
- Private members from a region may not act in the best interest of the member region.

State and Federal Members of Parliament, though important stakeholders, are elected to distinct tiers of government. If the MDA is a local government representative body, why are elected Members of State and Federal Parliament's eligible for both membership and voting rights? There is a potential risk of providing a platform for an unfair level of political influence over the MDA though there is no suggestion that has to date occurred. (There are two MP individual members)

Consideration should be given to certain elected positions and election procedures, for example, Sec 8(2)(b) of the Constitution [Composition of the Board] refers to only one Vice President, where consideration could be given to electing a Vice President from the Northern Basin and one from the Southern Basin at the MDA Board level.

Section 20 of the Constitution relating to Life Members lacks detail in terms of how many Life Members may be nominated by a Region per year. Given the accompanying voting rights at the Region and National level a limit on the number of Life Members a Region/Member can nominate annually should be considered.

It is Region 6's view that, if supported, such a review of the governance framework, organisational structure and membership (including fee structure) would logically take place first and before resources were committed to recruitment of new members.



G Andrezza spoke on the Motion. Noted that any overbank flows were currently not being accredited to water for the environment.

A Kassebaum proposed an amendment to the Motion. Proposed the removal of point 3.

G Andrezza accepted the amendment.

L Yates clarified that an unregulated flow with a large body of water going downstream may not go where it is needed.

D Thurley noted that the amended Motion consisted of Points 1 and 2. Noted that the raised question within the Motion would need to be addressed following correspondence from Minister Plibersek MP.

**CARRIED (G Andrezza/A Nicholls)**

**That the Murray Darling Association write to the Minister for the Environment and Water, Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP:**

- 1. Seeking an explanation of the methodology governing “Unregulated Flows” in the Murray-Darling Basin.**
- 2. Seeking an explanation as to why “Unregulated Flows” that remain in the River system are not recognised as “Environmental Flows.”**

**Key Arguments:**

The wet weather period during 2020/22 was a multi-year La Nina event which resulted in enormous flows through the Murray-Darling Basin. Significant periods of time were declared as “Unregulated Flows.” During periods of “Unregulated Flows,” consumptive users are authorised to extract water from the river system without that water being charged against their licence allocation.

Likewise, any “Unregulated Flow” water that flows down the river system during the same period is not charged against the “Environmental Water” allocation.

In reality, only a very small proportion of “Unregulated Flows” is extracted by consumptive users during such events therefore the vast majority of the water stays within the river system and eventually passes through the system and out to sea.

These flows through to the sea provide substantial environmental benefits but are not currently charged or debited against the environmental water account/allocation.

This Motion seeks to have the methodology for “Unregulated Flows” amended to require water that remains in the river system to be charged against the environmental water account/allocation.

G Andrezza spoke on the Motion, reviewed the recommendation.

A Kassebaum proposed an amendment of the Motion. Noted that the Motion mentions “all dialogue.” Proposed the removal of “all.”

G Andrezza confirmed the amendment. Noted that he had been approached by a body that was unwilling to provide all information while requesting the MDA advocate on an issue raised. Indicated that he could not advocate for an issue without knowing what the MDA would be advocating for.

**CARRIED (G Andrezza/J Chaffey)**

**MDA Region 9 moves that the MDA advocates to Federal and State Governments that local councils, as elected representative of local communities and stewards of local social, economic, and environmental health and wellbeing, be routinely included in dialogue and planning related to the implementation of the Murray Darling Basin Plan in their areas, including government dialogue with third parties, and that this engagement be timely, transparent, authentic, and meaningful.**

**Objective:**

The motion aims to ensure that local councils are included from the get-go in ALL discussions about Basin Plan projects in their areas, including discussions between state of federal governments and third parties, such as irrigation companies, and that these discussions are undertaken in a spirit of co-operation, collaboration, openness, and full transparency.

***Who would benefit from this motion?***

The beneficiaries will be local communities, local economies and local environments as councils have a wide mandate to steward the triple bottom line, as opposed to some parties whose drivers can be narrow and often led by self-interest.

**Key Arguments:**

***What is the current context/issue?***

Federal and State Government and Irrigation Companies are often working in isolation with projects and initiatives and are not sharing the information about these proposals with other stakeholders including local government.

This issue therefore heightens concern over the lack of opportunity and timeliness for local communities and local councils to receive and give information or feedback and be involved in discussion around proposed water savings projects.

***What are the risks of this motion doesn't get up?***

There will continue to be a lack of transparency, communication, and co-operation in terms of water savings projects and potential negative effects from decisions that may in turn badly impact communities.

Further, there will be lost opportunities to collaborate early to hone ideas so that outcomes are genuinely a win-win for all concerned, including the community, the economy, and the environment.

***What is the broader benefit to Basin communities if this motion is successful?***

A more collaborative, open, and transparent way forward for discussing, understanding, and assessing water savings projects rather than any one stakeholder influencing decisions that aren't necessarily in the best interests of the greater good.

G Andreazza spoke on the Motion, reviewed the recommendation.

A Kassebaum spoke in support of the Motion. Noted that if this had been done from the start, SDLAM projects likely would not be so far behind.

J Modica noted support for the Motion, queried whether there was clarification of the current framework.

D Thurley advised that this question would be reviewed and discussed outside of the AGM.

#### **CARRIED (G Andreazza/A Kassebaum)**

**That MDA lobby respective Governments to report publicly on a quarterly basis progress to finalise and submit SDLAM projects to appropriate agencies for certification and implementation as per the deadline as determined by the Australian Government Minister for Water.**

#### **Objective:**

Regular reporting of progress of projects.

#### ***Who would benefit from this motion?***

The whole region including the triple bottom line framework of economic, social, and environmental considerations.

#### **Key Arguments:**

#### ***What is the current context/issue?***

Concern that SDLAM projects are not being adequately or properly funded and that current understanding is that approved projects are well behind in being completed.

#### ***What are the risks of this motion doesn't get up?***

There will be a continuation of a lack of reporting on projects regardless of the deadline.

#### ***What is the broader benefit to Basin communities if this motion is successful?***

Regions will have a far better understanding of the progress of programs and what needs to be undertaken to achieve completion within the deadlines.

G Andrezza spoke on the Motion, reviewed the recommendation.

A Kassebaum noted that he spoke against the Motion. Noted that that Region 5 supported points 1, 4, 5, and 6, but could not support points 2, and 3.

J Chaffey noted he supported the Motion.

J Modica noted he spoke against the Motion

L Yates noted he spoke against the Motion. Noted that she did not agree with Point 4. Indicated that she was willing to try the method put forth by Minister Plibersek MP.

A Keen queried whether there was a willingness to amend the Motion. Proposed an amendment that points 2, 3, and 4 be removed.

D Thurley queried whether G Andrezza was willing to remove these points.

G Andrezza noted that he was willing to remove Points 2, and 3.

A Keen noted some concern with Point 4.

D Thurley noted the amended Motion, with points 2, and 3 removed. Opened the Motion to a Vote.

M lamb identified 20 Votes in favour, with 10 Votes against.

#### **CARRIED (G Andrezza/J Chaffey)**

**MDA Region 9, being concerned about implications for Basin communities in regional and rural Australia, moves that the MDA responds to Water Amendment Bill (Restoring Our Rivers Bill – August 2023) by advocating to the Minister, Parliamentarians, Murray Darling Basin Board and executive, the Senate and the Department of Climate Change, Environment and Water, that it:**

- **Supports the timeframe extensions for the SDLAM projects until 31 Dec 2026 and the States ability to add new projects to the suit of packages to achieve the 605GL “downwater”.**
- **Is concerned by the shift to ‘minimising social economic impacts’ from what was previously a commitment to full socio-economic neutrality testing, and the effects this may have on agriculture, irrigation, and communities,**
- **Calls for an urgent reconciliation of the latest science, global best practice, environmental achievements, and new ideas to inform an intelligent review of the Basin Plan in collaboration with local communities.**
- **Calls for a renewed focus on actions that will provide the greatest environmental returns for rivers.**

#### **Objective:**

##### ***What is your Motion trying to achieve?***

The Bill as it stands seriously risks taking Basin Communities to an economic tipping point from which they will never recover and, arguably, for no good reason other than chasing recovery targets modelled over 10 years ago that may not even be relevant or required today. The consequences to the nation, let alone local communities, has not been fully/properly investigated and understood. It would be irresponsible to change legislation to the extent proposed without first doing a comprehensive review of the Plan informed by the latest science (environmental, social, economic, cultural) and a full assessment of the range of alternative levers that could contribute to healthier river systems (beyond just adding water).

The motion does however support the extension in time for the delivery of SDLAM projects and the inclusion of new projects.

### **Who would benefit from this motion?**

Basin communities, including communities that are significant contributors to Australia's farming sector / food security and that support associated value adding industries (many of which are major export earners for the nation).

### **Key Arguments:**

#### **What is the current context/issue?**

- A. The Bill effectively removes the cap on water buybacks, commits fully to recovering the 450ML of "upwater", including through buybacks, and removes the socio-economic neutrality testing in favour of 'minimising' economic impacts by way of "funding for community adjustment assistance". These one-off "adjustment assistance" actions by governments are tokenistic at best and fail to recognise the considerable and perpetual contribution of agriculture and manufacturing to regional and national economies. "Adjustment assistance" is never ongoing and is a serious risk to local economies, especially in irrigation communities of which there are many across the Basin states. It should not be forgotten that water recovery has already cost an estimated 10,000 jobs across Basin communities and it would be foolish of Basin communities to sit by and watch while further jobs are eroded.

It is noted that the Basin Plan has already recovered 2100GL for the environment (4 Sydney Harbours) and that the CEWH and EWAGs across the Basin have recognised and celebrated many environmental success stories as a result of increased environmental watering. Presenting the Plan as a failure to date is plain wrong – there is more to celebrate than criticise. Today, towns, industries and agriculture across the Basin only access 28% of inflows, meaning what is left for the environment is well within globally accepted standards for water diversions. There is also no point in recovering further water when delivery of the current volumes of environmental water remains constrained. It's important to not act rashly but instead take a considered and intelligent approach to further policy or legislative change, ideally via a full review of the Basin Plan done in genuinely consultation with all stakeholders.

- B. The Bill chases water recover numbers based on 10-year-old models and ignores the latest science about what will truly help rivers recover the most. The Bill ignores the existing inability of the CEWH to use what water it already has and doggedly chases water recovery for the environment without properly exploring the economic impacts on local communities and the nation. There are many other ways to achieve healthier rivers that need priority attention – these include:
- Improved river operations that could free up more discretionary water for the environment.
  - Improved recognition of the effects of private partnerships, such as private property wetlands that are estimated to be 93% of wetlands) and private watering arrangements with the CEWH.
  - Improved fish programs including introduction of trialed carp herpes to address degradation of in-stream habitat; fish ladders / fish passage projects at weirs such as Menindee, Balranald, and Mildura; as well as expanded fish screening programs.
  - Further modernisation programs in irrigation districts (including private districts)
  - Investigating alternative (temporary) market solutions for environmental water when absolutely necessary (instead of permanently depleting the consumptive pool)
  - Investigating local community / council environmental programs using available water and wastewater
- C. There are already several alternatives projects being proposed to help achieve sustainable diversion adjustment targets – such as the Murrumbidgee Optimisation Program and Reconnected (Murray) Floodplains Project. It is good that the legislation change will open up an opportunity for their inclusion instead of restricting projects to those tabled some years ago.

***What are the risks of this motion doesn't get up?***

- A) Farmers in distress (such as wine grape farmers in 2023) will immediately sell their water to the government for a premium rate, reducing the amount of water available in the productive pool. This will negatively impact farming outputs as well as the viability of irrigation schemes and value adding processing industries, many of which are major employers and major contributors to Australian export earnings.
- B) Buybacks will prevail at the expense of local communities and the Australian economy, and opportunities for win-win outcomes that deliver healthier rivers using alternative strategies to water recovery will have been lost.
- C) Closing the door to new options to achieve Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment projects will increase the risk of further buybacks, reducing water availability in the consumptive pool and, ultimately, restricting Australia's ability to achieve its agricultural strategic goals.

***What is the broader benefit to Basin communities if this motion is successful?***

Communities across the Basin won't be blindsided by quick fix populist legislation that is very likely to leave them economically distressed — the rhetoric of 'minimising economic impacts' is vastly different to genuinely ensuring socio-economic neutrality. If this motion gets up and is successfully executed, Basin communities will benefit from intelligent, properly informed policy that seeks win-win outcomes focussed on the real goals (healthy rivers and a healthy environment), not the means (water recovery / buybacks). Importantly, Basin communities will be partners in co-creating any new legislation so that its implications are thoroughly understood and embraced by all concerned before being enshrined in legislation.

D Thurley noted that this Motion was a duplicate of Motion 5.19.

Recommendation:

MDA Region 9, being concerned about implications for Basin communities in regional and rural Australia, moves that the MDA responds to Water Amendment Bill (Restoring Our Rivers Bill – August 2023) by advocating to the Minister, Parliamentarians, Murray Darling Basin Board and executive, the Senate and the Department of Climate Change, Environment and Water, that it:

- Supports the timeframe extensions for the SDLAM projects until 31 Dec 2026 and the States ability to add new projects to the suit of packages to achieve the 605GL “downwater”.
- Opposes an end of the cap on buybacks (being 1500GL),
- Rejects strongly the shift from endeavouring to recover the 450GL “upwater” where it makes sense to a commitment to fully recover the 450GL, including through buybacks.
- Is concerned by the shift to ‘minimising social economic impacts’ from what was previously a commitment to full socio-economic neutrality testing, and the effects this may have on agriculture, irrigation, and communities,
- Calls for an urgent reconciliation of the latest science, global best practice, environmental achievements, and new ideas to inform an intelligent review of the Basin Plan in collaboration with local communities.
- Calls for a renewed focus on actions that will provide the greatest environmental returns for rivers.

Objective:

What is your Motion trying to achieve?

The Bill as it stands seriously risks plunging Basin communities to an economic tipping point from which they will never recover and equate to no good recovery other than chasing recovery targets modelled over 10 years ago that may be irrelevant, obsolete or required today. The consequences to the nation, let alone local businesses, has not been fully/properly investigated and understood. It would be irresponsible to change legislation to the extent proposed without first doing a comprehensive review of the Bill informed by the latest science (environmental, social, economic, cultural) and a full assessment of the range of alternative levers that could contribute to healthier river systems (beyond just adding water).

The motion does however support the extension in time for the delivery of SDLAM projects and the inclusion of new projects.

Who would benefit from this motion?

Basin communities, including communities that are significant contributors to Australia’s farming sector/food security and that support associated value adding industries (many of which are major export earners for the nation).

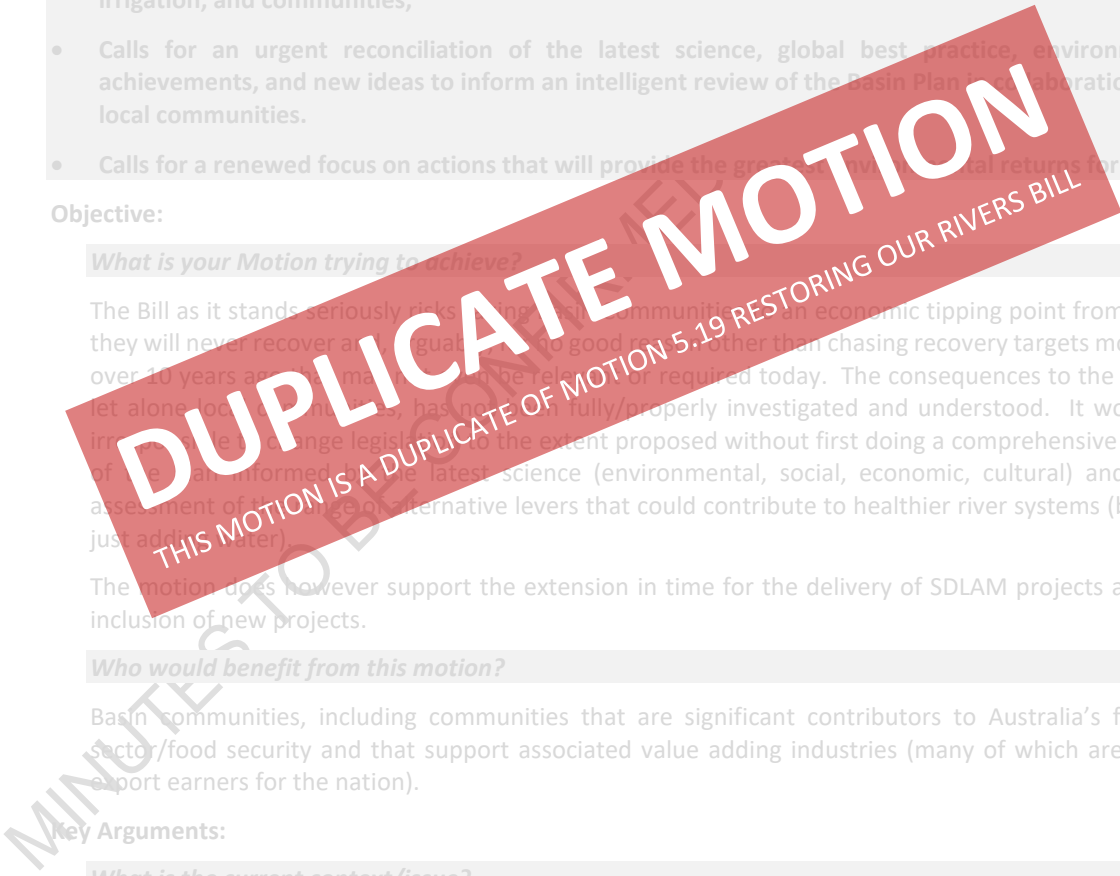
Key Arguments:

What is the current context/issue?

Federal and State Government and Irrigation Companies are often working in isolation with projects and initiatives and are not sharing the information about these proposals with other stakeholders including local government.

This issue therefore heightens concern over the lack of opportunity and timeliness for local communities and local councils to receive and give information or feedback and be involved in discussion around proposed water savings projects.

What are the risks of this motion doesn’t get up?



There will continue to be a lack of transparency, communication, and co-operation in terms of water savings projects and potential negative effects from decisions that may in turn badly impact communities.

Further, there will be lost opportunities to collaborate early to hone ideas so that outcomes are genuinely a win-win for all concerned, including the community, the economy, and the environment.

***What is the broader benefit to Basin communities if this motion is successful?***

A more collaborative, open, and transparent way forward for discussing, understanding and assessing water savings projects rather than any one stakeholder influencing decisions that aren't necessarily in the best interests of the greater good.

**DUPLICATE MOTION**

THIS MOTION IS A DUPLICATE OF MOTION 5.19 RESTORING OUR RIVERS BILL



J Chaffey spoke on the Motion, indicated that he wished to withdraw the Motion noting earlier discussions and presentations by MDBA CEO Andrew McConville had provided new information.

**WITHDRAWN****That the MDA call on:**

- 1. The Federal Water Minister the Hon Tanya Plibersek to engage a suitably qualified third party to undertake a review of the effect of the current Basin Plan water recovery on basin communities.**
- 2. The review must quantify the social impact caused by population loss, the economic impact created through reduced access to water and the environmental benefit of the recovered water, and**
- 3. The report must be made available to the public prior to continued community consultation on the next version of the basin plan.**
- 4. The Minister halt all planned actions to recover the 450GL of water under the basin plan.**

**Objective:**

The aim of this motion is simply to quantify the economic and social affect the Basin Plan has had on basin communities before any future versions of a Basin Plan are debated and or endorsed.

**Key Arguments:**

Murray-Darling Basin Plan: Implementation Review was announced on 2 May 2023.

Terms of reference

The Federal Treasurer requested that the Productivity Commission undertake an inquiry into the effectiveness of the implementation of the Basin Plan 2012 and water resource plans.

Scope of the inquiry

In accordance with the provisions of Part 3 of the Water Act, the Commission is to report on the matter of the effectiveness of the implementation of the Basin Plan and water resource plans for the five-year period ending 19 December 2023.

In undertaking the inquiry, the Productivity Commission should assess the progress towards implementing the Basin Plan, including the:

- extent to which the Basin Plan is on track to be delivered within statutory timeframes,
- the likelihood and extent to which activities and arrangements currently in place will ensure that these provisions and timeframes will be met,
- the effectiveness of reforms to address previous Productivity Commission recommendations, including the Joint Basin government response to the Productivity Commission inquiry report: Murray–Darling Basin Plan: Five-year Assessment (2019), and
- the extent to which the current framework for implementing the Basin Plan, including the framework for monitoring, reporting, and evaluation, is likely to be effective in supporting implementation of the Basin Plan.

The impact on regional communities must be assessed before any progress on any future versions of the Basin Plan is undertaken.

The implementation review is a start; however, it falls short of identifying impacts on Basin communities, communities that have realised dramatic loss of population, GRP and a prosperous future.

J Chaffey spoke on the Motion, reviewed the recommendation. Noted that Region 11 sought support by the MDA in the protection of Regional Water utilities.

A Kassebaum noted that he spoke in support of this Motion.

**CARRIED (J Chaffey/J Modica)**

**That the MDA call on the NSW Water Minister to amend legislation that will ensure protections are in place for Regional Water Utilities from privatisation, as recently resolved and legislation amended for Sydney Water and Hunter Water.**

**Objective:**

That the NSW Government provides the same protections in legislation against potential privatisation of Regional Water and Sewer Utilities as recently passed legislation in the NSW Parliament that amended NSW Constitution to provide such protections to Sydney Water and Hunter Water.

**Key Arguments:**

The NSW Government successfully debated in both houses of parliament for change that enshrined Sydney Water and Hunter Water in the NSW Constitution to ensure they stay publicly owned; however there is no mention of local government in the proposed amendments and protection of our Water and Sewer Utilities.

Recent survey results by Country Mayors Association of NSW clearly showed that it is critical that water remains in the hands of Regional, Rural and Remote communities, through local government, they strongly and respectfully called on the NSW State Government to include the protection of Regional water and sewer assets in the NSW Constitution and Region 11 is seeking the Murray Darling Association's support to achieve these protections.

MINUTES TO BE CONFIRMED AT 80PM AGR

## Motion 5.23 FUNDING COMMITMENT FOR SAFE AND SECURE WATER PROGRAMS

Region 11

J Chaffey spoke on the Motion, reviewed the recommendation.

D Thurley indicated that he supported this Motion from an AlburyCity point of view.

### **CARRIED (J Chaffey/D Thurley)**

**That the MDA call on the NSW Government to commit further funding of \$250 million per annum for safe and secure water programs, in particular safe and secure water for critical human needs and food and fibre production.**

### **Objective:**

#### ***What is this motion trying to achieve?***

The NSW Safe and Secure Water Program was established in 2017 with a \$1 Billion funding commitment for Regional Infrastructure by the NSW Coalition Government, that funding was a commitment of \$200 Million per annum that was made available to Local Government in Regional NSW for the co-funding of eligible water and sewer projects to improve public health, water secure, environmental outcomes and/or social benefits.

Funding for this program will soon come to an end and a commitment from the newly elected NSW Government needs to be committed through to 2027.

### **Key Arguments:**

The NSW Safe and Secure Water program has become a critical funding program for Regional, Rural and Remote communities to supplement the limited funds available within Local Government to provide the critical infrastructure upgrades to ensure the needs of our growing communities are met.

In recent years Regional NSW has seen significant increase in population due to migration from Metropolitan and outer metropolitan centres, and additionally a significant increase in immigration allowance by the Federal Government.

The Financial constraints on Local Government in NSW has never been greater than today, without the ongoing financial support from the NSW Government, Regional NSW will not be in the position to take advantage of the growth opportunities and that in turn will have a negative impact on the state of NSW.

## 6. Motions from the Floor

### Motion 6.1

### RETROFITTING EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

*Region 7*

A Tilley spoke on the Motion, noted that he wished to withdraw the Motion.

#### **WITHDRAWN**

**That the MDA investigate potential for retro fitting existing infrastructures for hydroelectric capability.**

Objective:

#### ***What is your motion trying to achieve?***

In view of current technology now available, it is suggested that a review be carried out of the opportunities throughout the basin where further hydro-electric power generation is feasible and viable especially on existing infrastructure.

## Motion 6.2 INFRASTRUCTURE

## COMMITMENT TO CONSTRUCTION AND COMPLETION OF

### Region 7

A Tilley spoke on the Motion, reviewed the recommendation.

A Kassebaum requested the Motion be amended to specify Lagoon and Ocean.

A Keen noted uncertainty whether the project had been commenced, suggested an amendment for the Motion to read "... seek a report into the completion and construction..."

A Tilley indicated that he was willing to accept the amendment to refer to specific Lagoon and Ocean.

### **CARRIED (A Tilley/J Chaffey)**

**Region 7 seeks a commitment to the construction and completion of the proposed installation of the pipe connector between the southern part of the south lagoon of the Coorong to the Southern ocean.**

### **Objective:**

#### ***What is your motion trying to achieve?***

The Healthy Coorong, Healthy Basin (HCHB) program is a commitment jointly funded by the Australian and South Australian governments, to restore the long-term health of the Coorong.

The HCHB Coorong Infrastructure Investigation has explored opportunities for long term infrastructure to improve the ecological health of the Coorong South Lagoon.

The studies have clearly identified that:

- Historically this water body was connected to the Southern Ocean as what is now Young Husband Peninsula was previously a chain of islands.
- The seawater from the Southern Ocean can be beneficially used to restore and sustain a healthy north and south lagoon. In particular maintaining the salinity level below a maximum of 1.7 times seawater.

Above this level there is a complete drop off in the ecosystem. The science has now determined this. The veteran fishermen in the area have known and observed this.

The infrastructure required to allow the water quality to be sustainably managed for restoration and the future has been determined.

Further investigations, design and approvals are being carried out from 2022 to 2024.

The construction and commissioning of the required infrastructure is a matter of some urgency since in the hypersaline state, the build-up of eutrophic layer of the bed has compounded.

Whilst the salinity reduction is achieved within months after commissioning of this infrastructure, restoring the bed will take years. The scientific work has discovered an organism that burrows into the bed in healthy waters. This burrowing will help reduce the years required to bring the bed back to sustainable long-term health.

It is now some 14 years since the end of the millennium drought. The need for temporary and/or permanent infrastructure pump out from the southern end of the south lagoon were considered then but nothing happened. Surely now, the timing for construction should be treated as time is of the essence.

R Coleman spoke on the Motion, noted wished to amend the Motion wording to remove “Goynes” and replace with “engineered structures.” R Coleman spoke on the amended motion and reviewed the recommendation.

**CARRIED (R Coleman/A Tilley)**

**That the Mouth of the River Murray be investigated for the installation of correctly designed engineered structures to enable a safe entrance which will minimise the continual dredging.**

**Objective:**

***What is your motion trying to achieve?***

The Murray Mouth dredging has been continual except for the current break thanks to the effects of the most recent major flood / high flow. There have previously been brief periods after high flow events when the dredging has been suspended.

Not one, but two dredges have been required.

The longer it goes the greater the difficulty in finding places sufficiently distant that that the sand pumped out is not being washed back in.

This has been a problem for some time now.

Booster pumps and additional pipelines will be needed.

A survey of all east coast and west coast river mouths shows a majority with trained entrances for safety of navigation and for greatly reducing sand inflow.

This motion recommends that the efficacy of groynes again be considered to achieve the optimum outcomes for the long term.

Geotextile sand filled containers can be part of this solution.

A review by the most expert peers of wave refraction, coastal estuarine sand movement should be engaged to address the issues and recommend solutions.

G Andrezza spoke on the Motion, reviewed the recommendation.

G Andrezza noted that delegates had heard from the Federal Water Minister earlier during the 79<sup>th</sup> National Conference that there would be socio-economic aspects looked at, but noted that wording was very vague. Indicated that there was a need to know where water was coming from.

J Modicat spoke against the Motion. Noted a need to give the current Federal Government an opportunity to wade into the Bain Plan.

J Chaffey spoke in favour of the Motion. Noted that in the Northern Basin Communities water buybacks had made an incredible impact on its communities. Indicated that without people, the communities would die.

A Kassebaum spoke in favour of the Motion. A Kassebaum indicated that, in good governance of the AGM, Motions should be submitted in time and be reviewed with the time they deserve.

D Thurley put the Motion to a vote.

M Lamb noted 19 for, 11 against.

#### **CARRIED (G Andrezza/A Kassebaum)**

**That the MDA commend the NSW State Premier and NSW State Water Minister to advocate strongly to the Federal Water Minister for the maintaining of the Triple Bottom Line Approach and the Neutrality test to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan in support of the Victorian State Government to ensure the balance of social, economic, and environmental concerns.**

#### **Objective:**

##### ***What is your motion trying to achieve?***

A reinstatement of the Triple Bottom Line Approach, as when it is applied to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan (MDBP), balances the needs of the present as well as the future.

That is, the Triple Bottom Line Approach considers all options for water savings projects and initiatives that will deliver positive outcomes and not compromise current and future social, economic and environmental objectives.

##### ***Who would benefit from your Motion?***

All Basin communities would applaud the reinstatement of the Triple Bottom Line Approach as it has been previously stated by the Federal Government to be a commitment to communities; substantially aimed at providing communities a more certain and sustainable future.

#### **Key Arguments:**

##### ***What is the current context/issue?***

The Federal Water Minister recently brokered a deal with states other than Victoria to re-write the MDBP, allowing for the widespread resumption of water buybacks in an effort to meet the water saving targets.

It is reminded that in 2018 Basin Water Ministers agreed water buybacks could not be used to meet the environmental water-saving targets because of the potential socio-economic harm they would cause to communities.

The recent amendment Bill with its specific inclusion that allows the Federal Government to buyback licences effectively ends the potential for any success of a Triple Bottom Line Approach.

##### ***What are the risks if this Motion doesn't get up?***

There will be a heightened risk to certainty and sustainability for communities in the Murray Darling Basin and a negative impact on the Australian economy as Farmers and Businesses in the Basin area will be severely impacted.

The opportunity is here and now to send the Commonwealth Government a message that there is grave concern for the future of the Basin communities unless there is an accepted focus and effort to promote a Triple Bottom Line Approach towards implementing the MDBP.

If the Triple Bottom Line Approach is not reinstated and NSW follows Victoria in their stance, this will have a deleterious effect on the total Murray Darling Basin Plan, effectively sidelining efforts for a collegiate approach to completing critical environment and infrastructure projects, and potentially a divide in water implementation policy.

***What is the broader benefit to basin communities if this Motion is successful?***

If this Motion is positive in its impact, it will mean a return to the previously and widely supported Triple Bottom Line Approach and therefore a fair and equitable plan with potential balance between all the concerns around social, economic and environmental impacts of the MDBP.

## **7. Closing Comments**

D Thurley noted that this concluded the business of the AGM.

D Thurley thanked M Lamb, and T Phillips, for the incredible work undertaken to prepare the 2023 National Conference and AGM.

## **8. Meeting Close**

The Chair declared the meeting closed at **4:57pm, ACST**.