



Board Meeting 411 MINUTES

18 October 2021

Murray Darling Association Incorporated
ABN 64 636 490 493

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Meeting Commencement

The Chair declared the meeting open at 9:30am and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Acknowledgement of Country

The Murray Darling Association pays respects to the traditional owners and the nations of the Murray-Darling Basin. We acknowledge their deep cultural, social, environmental, and economic connection to their land and waters, and the Murray Darling Association understands the need for recognition of traditional owner knowledge and their cultural values in natural resource management associated with the Basin.

2. Attendance

2.1 Present

Delegate	Council	Region
Cr David Thurley	Albury City Council	Region 1
Cr Bronwyn Thomas	Federation Council	Region 2
Cr Tim Elstone	Wentworth Shire Council	Region 4
Cr Peter Raison	Mid Murray Council	Region 5
Cr Melissa Rebbeck	Alexandrina Council	Region 6
Cr Andrew Tilley	City of Mitcham	Region 7
Cr Craig Davies	Narromine Council	Region 10A
Cr John Campbell	Gunnedah Shire Council	Region 11
Peter George	M&S Group	Interim Treasurer
Emma Bradbury	MDA	CEO

2.2 Apologies

Mayor Samantha O'Toole	Balonne Shire Council	Region 12
Cr Phyllis Miller	Forbes Shire Council	Region 10
Cr Glen Andrezza	Griffith City Council	Region 9

MOTION

(Cr J Campbell / Cr P Raison)

That the apologies be received and noted.

CARRIED

2.3 Declarations

Emma Bradbury declared a direct financial interest regarding item 5.2

3. Confirmation of Previous Minutes

MOTION

(Cr B Thomas / Cr P Raison)

That the minutes of MDA Board Meeting 410 held on 16 August 2021 be accepted as an accurate record.

CARRIED

4. Reports

4.1 Chairman's Report

The Chair noted a recent COVID-19 outbreak in Albury, with 26 cases counted to date and no indication from the health department regarding any lockdowns to slow the virus transmission. The Chair emphasised that, while Sydney may have reached the vaccination milestone for looser restrictions, regional communities have not, with Albury having only reached around 60% double vaccinations.

The Chair noted that the NSW Government released the Draft Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan for public comment, indicating that Region 1 intends to make a submission.

The Chair noted that the CEO for the Alliance for Water Stewardship Megan McLeod attended the Region 1 Ordinary Meeting as the guest speaker. Citing the recent moves by the Renmark Paranga Council towards a water stewardship accreditation the Chair indicated that Region 1 would move to do the same.

4.2 Chief Executive Officer's Report

The CEO tabled her report noting that much of the details are covered in the meeting's agenda.

MOTION

(Cr B Thomas / Cr C Davies)

That the CEO's report be received and noted.

CARRIED

5. Budget and Finance

---[Interim Treasurer Pete George arrived 9:40am]---

5.1 Finance Reports

The Treasurer provided the reports for August and September 2021.

Refer to Attachment 4.1

MOTION

(Cr M Rebbeck/ Cr T Elstone)

That the financial reports be received and noted.

CARRIED

5.2 Budget & Cashflow

The Treasurer tabled a current cashflow budget has been prepared, including calculations for the payout of the CEO backpay approved in March/April, but not yet paid and the CEO's long service leave and annual leave, payable on the completion in the role.

The board discussed the importance of recruiting a CEO who is skilled and able to achieve revenue growth KPI's rapidly, in light of how tight the budget for the coming year will be.

The lease on the current premises concludes 17th December and has not been renewed. Discussions with Murray River Council are continuing regarding renting office space to host/ accommodate Echuca staff, Tim Phillips with council.

An inventory of all assets and office equipment is being compiled, with a decision required on what to liquidate and what to retain. Storage options for the archives should be considered.

MOTION

(Cr B Thomas / Cr C Davies)

That the cashflow budget be received and noted.

CARRIED

5.3 Treasurer

The Minutes of Board Meeting 403 on 19 October 2020 record as follows:

P George noted that he would like to see someone else on the board take on the position of Treasurer. P George will remain in the position for the following three months pending the appointment of a treasurer. The board all showed appreciation for P George for his support and role as Treasurer.

In preparing for the handover to a new CEO, a treasurer should be appointed. Following discussions with several councils, it is unlikely that the position will be filled as a delegated function to a member council.

Preparation and progress of record keeping under the Xero system is now highly efficient and transparent, making it both practicable and appropriate for an existing board member to fill the role of treasurer.

Action

Emma to continue discuss options with interested board members

6. Correspondence

6.1 Incoming

Date	Received From	Subject
01/10/2021	Cr Brian Lockyer	Resignation from the board

6.2 Outgoing

Date	Issued to	Subject
06/10/2021	Southern Kuya – CEO	Carp Smart Lower Murray Carp Control Project
05/10/2021	Murray Regional Council	Project Funding letters of support
20/08/2021	Yorta Yorta Nations Aboriginal Corp	Invitation to collaborate

MOTION

(Cr C Davies / Cr B Thomas)

That the correspondence be received and noted.

CARRIED

MOTION

(Cr C Davies / Cr B Thomas)

That the Board write a letter to thank Cr Brian Lockyer for his longstanding input and commitment to Chair of Region 8 and wish him the best in all his future endeavours.

CARRIED

7. Business Arising

7.1 Board Resolution Register

The Board reviewed the motions and actions completed, and those pending.
Refer to Attachment 7.1

MOTION

(Cr B Thomas / Cr M Rebbeck)

That the Board Resolution Register report be received and noted.

CARRIED

7.2 MDA Pre-budget campaign for recurrent funding

- E Bradbury noted that Region 12 had already distributed their letters.
- Cr C Davies indicated that the documents for Region 10A had been sent to their Executive Officer to be distributed later that day.
- Cr B Thomas stated that the letters are completed and will be posted this week.
- Cr J Campbell noted that Region 11 will be distributing their letters Wednesday afternoon.
- Cr D Thurley indicated that Region 1's letters will be distributed next week.

7.3 Project Funding Applications Update

The CEO, Treasurer and several project partners met with the Beau Hug and Fiona Martin on 11/10/2021 to get feedback on those projects that were unsuccessful under CIP.

For full details – see report attached
Refer to Attachment 7.3

MOTION

(Cr D Thurley / Cr C Davies)

That the report be received and noted.

CARRIED

8. General Business

8.1 National Water Grid Authority

The NWGA Advisory Body recently met virtually and agreed the forward agenda. They would welcome the opportunity to meet with a couple of representatives of the MDA at their meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 24 November. The location is not yet settled, but possibly Canberra but will obviously be constrained by travel restrictions.

More information on the role of the [National Water Grid Authority](#) can be found on their website.

ACTION

That the Board appoint Cr M Rebbeck to attend this meeting.

That the CEO continue communicating with Board members to confirm representatives for the meeting.

8.2 MDA Basin Communities Leadership Program

The MDA has had to again vary the delivery of the project in relation to the face-to-face workshops due to the outbreak of the Delta variant of Coronavirus.

The workshops were (re)scheduled for delivery across the southern Basin in the following locations and dates.

Victoria	Rochester	20-21 September 2021
	Merbein-Red Cliffs	28-29 September 2021
	Colignan	30-31 September 2021
South Australia	Cobdogla, Berri-Barmera	18-19 October 2021
	Loxton-Waikerie	20-21 October 2021
	Lower Lakes	25-26 October 2021
	Swan Reach	27-28 October 2021

Unfortunately, rolling outbreaks and lockdowns across September caused all events to be cancelled – first up one by one, then ultimately all events.

Extensive consultation with the participants and mentors confirmed that they would rather wait until the lockdowns were lifted and do the workshops face to face than to do them on-line. Further, the lockdowns have also impacted our facilitators. In one instance the Rochester workshop had to be cancelled 12 hours prior to commencement. Our facilitator was exposed to a T1 site and sent into isolation on the Sunday morning before the workshop. I spent that Sunday contacting all participants, mentors, caterers, venues etc.

These disruptions have come at significant financial, operational, and health and well-being costs for the team, accounting for the budget contingency and more.

My team and I have put a lot of thought and some preliminary work into transitioning the workshops to online or blended delivery mode to get around the Covid interruptions. Ultimately, we have resolved not to proceed down that path for the following reasons.

- i. Consultation with facilitators, past participants, remaining enrolled participants, and mentors has indicated that people will not attend the two-day workshops if they are just delivered as an online meeting.
- ii. Experience with the workshops in the northern Basin has shown that having participants and mentors attend via Zoom is highly problematic and diminishes the value of the experience for all. To roll the workshops over to a Zoom-meeting type delivery would compromise the outcomes and intention of the program. To do this for whole cohorts would undermine the Commonwealth's investment under the MDBEDP, and would reflect badly on the Leadership Program and on the MDA.
- iii. The program could be re-written to enable the workshops to be delivered as a virtual experience. However, this would require significant investment of time and money, adapting the content, pedagogy, scheduling, software etc. Based on our experience adapting the MDA's 2020 National Conference to a fully virtual event, the cost to adapt the BCLP would need to be properly scoped, but I estimate it to be in the order of \$250,000. Unfortunately, this was not a contingency countenanced in the original budget or design.
- iv. Australia is gradually navigating a way out of lockdown. Basin communities will be keen to re-engage and meet in person and the country opens up. The Basin Communities

Leadership Program will provide an important opportunity for our communities can re-engage and should be delivered as intended at that time.

The CEO noted that there is a strategy in place for delivering the balance of the workshops when our national Covid recovery roadmap provides the certainty we need to get about the country. Based on current projections, it is anticipated that this will be within the deadline of the program of April 2022. However, this will be contingent upon medical advice and of course on Australia's borders reopening.

MOTION

(Cr J Campbell / Cr T Elstone)

That the MDA remain committed to delivering the 2-day workshop component of the Basin Community Leadership Program on-site in a face to face format. CARRIED

8.3 Confidential Item

8.4 Report for Delegates

The report is provided for noting.

MOTION

(Cr B Thomas / Cr J Campbell)

That the Report for Delegates be received and noted. CARRIED

8.5 Communication and Briefing Reports

The following reports are provided for noting:

8.5.1 Out of the BOCS meeting report

Following the CEO's presentation to the BOC, the attached report was published on the BOC webpage.

Refer to Attachment 7.5.1

ACTION

That the MDA write a follow-up letter to the Basin Officials Committee thanking them for their time in September and look forward to the outcomes of their deliberations in November. CARRIED

8.5.2 Parliamentary Transcript

Following the CEO's presentation to the Select Committee on a panel with Cr Jane MacAllister, and Mayor Phillip O'Connor, the attached transcript is provided for noting.

Refer to Attachment 7.5.2

MOTION

(Cr B Thomas / Cr M Rebbeck)

That the Communication and Briefing reports be received and noted. CARRIED

9. National Conference 2022

9.1 Planning Committee meetings

The planning committee met in Albury in October. Planning for the event is well advanced, with dates, locations, and venues locked in.

Dates:

- Study Tour, 19th September, TBC
- Conference 20-21st September, Albury Entertainment Centre

E Bradbury made note that it would be beneficial to have Hannah Gebert and Cathryn Dawes to sit in on the next planning committee meeting and share feedback and information.

9.2 Draft AGM Motions

AGM motions are key to setting the agenda for the year ahead.

E Bradbury noted a focus on:

- Draft Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan
- Water Stewardship Accreditation,
- Infrastructure and infrastructure investment in the MDA regions

MOTION

(Cr D Thurley /Cr M Rebbeck)

That the dates for the 2022 National Conference and AGM are confirmed 19th to 21st September 2022

CARRIED

10. Closing Comments

Cr P Raison

- Reflected on the excellent handling and inclusiveness of the Region 6 Annual Stakeholder Symposium, noting more positive feedback than they were used to.
- Noted the importance and impact of the First Nations representation present and the welcome to country during the field trip.

Cr B Thomas

- Noted the upcoming Local Government NSW conference
- Indicated that Federation Council is in the process of writing up a Reconciliation Action Plan, encouraging other councils to do likewise.
- Noted the new Public Health Orders, wherein councils now have to ask for vaccination certificates, indicating that VIC counterparts will have to have vaccination certificates ready to attend events in NSW.

The CEO, Cr's Davies, Thurley and others all commended Cr Rebbeck and her team on an outstanding Region 6 2021 Symposium.

11. Meeting Close

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 11:00 am