

Representing communities across the Murray-Darling Basin

The Murray Darling Association is a membership-based peak representative organisation representing local government and communities across the Murray Darling Basin.

Membership of the Murray Darling Association is open to all local government and other entities within the Basin, and to individuals with an interest in ensuring a sustainable future for the Murray-Darling Basin.

We welcome new members and their involvement in activities and meetings with us.

The following document explores the benefits of MDA Membership, as well as ongoing progress, actions, and engagement by the Murray Darling Association advocating on behalf of its Members.

Murray Darling Association Inc.
Contact: Mark Lamb
Chief Executive Officer



WORKING TOWARDS Vision 2025



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

The MDA's Strategic Plan exists to drive the delivery of services to our MDA members, and sits within a broader planning context:

- At a local level, our member councils (through strategic community and land-use planning) champion the priorities and programs that resonate with those communities.
- Regionally, Joint Organisations and other regional local government organisations have identified their key environmental, economic and social focus through statements of strategic regional priorities.
- In the state and nation context, there is a series of key plans and initiatives that align strategically with MDA's purpose:
 - *National Energy Plan (incl. Snowy 2.0)*
 - *National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy*
 - *Murray-Darling Basin Plan*
 - *National Water Infrastructure Development Fund*
 - *2030 Agriculture Plan*

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

With four main pillars channelling the Association's performance, the Strategic Plan sets the organisation's direction for the next five years, and provides guidance to our members and stakeholders about our priorities and what we intend to deliver during this time.

Pillar 1: Member Services

Pillar 2: Science and Education

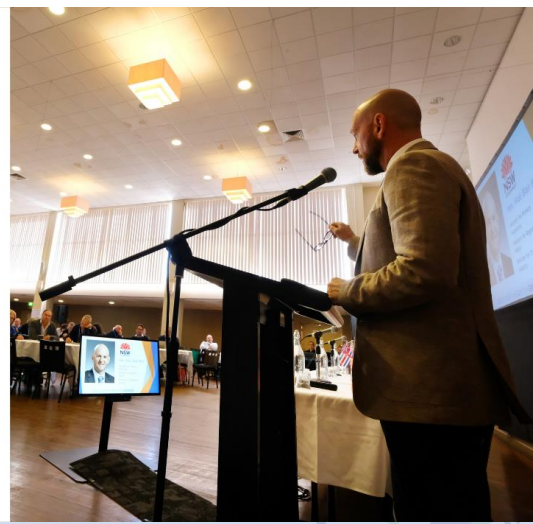
Pillar 3: Leadership and Engagement

Pillar 4: Corporate Development



FIND OUT MORE!

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



The benefits of being a MDA member

Becoming a MDA member can take your voice, your representation within the Murray-Darling Basin to the next level.



The benefits of Membership are flowing freely to all our regions!

The Murray Darling Association (MDA) is your peak body for local government in the management of Basin water resources, working together to inform and influence both State, and Federal Government.

The MDA strives to provide effective representation of Local Government and communities at State, and Federal, level in the development of policy and the management of Murray-Darling Basin resources.

With ongoing projects, influence, representation, and partnerships with the Australian Institute of Company Directors, the MDBA, the National Carp Control Plan, University of Southern Queensland, the One Basin CRC, and Australia's national science agency, the CSIRO, the MDA has much to offer to its members!



FIND OUT MORE!



Programs and Projects

The MDA continues to develop its partnerships with peak bodies and agencies across the Basin.

Find out more about what the MDA is doing to support Basin communities.

Engage with Councils across the Basin!

The MDA has strong partnerships with peak bodies and agencies across the Murray-Darling Basin, ensuring continued engagement with, and on behalf of councils and communities through ongoing projects, programs, and committees.

Involvement in the [Sustainable Recreation Steering Committee](#), and the [Murraylands Riverland LGA Water Position Paper](#), submissions of numerous reports ranging from the [Productivity Commission to the NSW Select Committee on Floodplain Harvesting](#), as well as partnerships with Australia's national science agency, the [CSIRO](#) have sought to address ongoing concerns and interests of its members, ensuring continued representation on a national stage.

Programs such as the [Save the Murray initiative](#), [Waterwise](#), and the recently concluded [Basin Communities Leadership Program](#) have brought water leaders across the Murray-Darling Basin together, to discuss and influence water, and Basin resource policy across SA, VIC, NSW, the ACT, and QLD.

Following the successful conclusion of the Basin Communities Leadership Program, the MDA will continue to develop industry leaders across the Basin through tailored programs and events.



FIND OUT MORE!

Contact the Murray Darling Association

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

03 5480 3805
mda.asn.au

Events and Conferences

The MDA holds numerous events, meetings and conferences across each year.

Find out more about what you can do with your MDA membership.



The MDA is your opportunity to be a part of the solution, to inform future policy!

The MDA hosts numerous events each year, such as the [Northern Basin Forum](#), the South Australian Inter-regional Meeting, and the MDA's [annual National Conference](#).

Membership, and involvement with the MDA is your opportunity to be part of the solution – to join the conversation, to inform future policy, and to engage with the innovators, scientists, educators, and leaders of our time!

With the MDA's upcoming 79th National Conference in The Rural City of Murray Bridge, 25 – 28 September 2022, there is no better time to ensure your community's needs are heard, addressed, and represented at a national scale.

Themed "*Partnership through collaboration across the Basin,*" the National Conference will address numerous topics such as *water use and water security, water quality, tourism,* and the ever-present impacts of *climate change* on Basin communities and businesses.



FIND OUT MORE!



MDA Membership

Organised into 12 Local Government areas, MDA members represent communities across NSW, VIC, QLD, and SA!

Find out more about MDA membership!

Our Purpose: Providing effective representation of Local Government and communities.

The Murray Darling Association is a membership-based peak representative organisation representing local government and the communities we serve across the Murray-Darling Basin since 1944.

As the third level of government in Australia, and the one most directly connected to community, local government has a valuable contribution to make in the processes, community consultation, and the formulation of decisions made and taken in the continuing implementation of the Basin Plan. This is enhanced beyond measure when local government is working together Basin wide.

Built on a strong foundation of good governance, we work with and for member councils, in collaboration with state based local government associations (LGASA, MAV, LGNSW and LGAQ), Regional Organisations of Councils, Joint Organisations and other local government affiliations.

The MDA provides its members with the means and opportunity to actively participate in informing water policy, and provides state and Federal governments, the MDBA, CSIRO, and other agencies with an opportunity to access community consultation and perspectives via a comprehensive community network coverage.



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MDA-CSIRO Partnership

Progressing: Science and Education, Informing better Government policy



Following a continued effort to develop relationships with peak science and education bodies, the MDA has strengthened its partnership with Australia's national science agency, the [CSIRO](#).

Working in partnership with the CSIRO, the Murray Darling Association met with [Narromine Shire Council](#), [Albury City Council](#), [Mildura Rural City Council](#), [City of Mitcham](#), [Greater Shepparton City Council](#), [Toowoomba Regional Council](#), [Alexandrina Council](#), the [MAV](#), [RAMJO](#), [ALGA](#), [LGNSW](#), and [LGASA](#) to discuss the [Circular Economy](#) and its ability to transform regional economies through turning trash into treasure.

Following on from the successful Circular Economy Market Analysis in 2022, the Murray Darling Association is reengaging with Local Government across the Murray-Darling Basin.

Working with Local Government through targeted analysis and engagement, the MDA will explore the level of Circular Economic engagement, opportunities and parries faced by Local Government, as well as the socio-economic outcomes and impacts from a Circular Economic transition.

Exciting circular times ahead, with ongoing discussions to further explore Local Government and the Circular Economy!



Basin Communities Leadership Program

Progressing: Science and Education, Informing better Government policy



The Murray Darling Association concluded its multi-year rollout of the Basin Communities Leadership Program in March 2022, engaging with Basin communities in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia.

The MDA engaged with participants through face-to-face workshops and engaging online training sessions that addressed leadership theory, water literacy, and communication.

The MDA worked in partnership with LGA's to support the community, boost the local economy and encourage trade in small businesses.

Whilst the Murray Darling Association has completed the current round of workshops, there is potential to conduct further workshops with targeted community groups, with the continued goal of improving water, and leadership literacy across the Murray-Darling Basin.



MRLGA Water Position Paper

Progressing: Local Leadership / Leadership and Engagement



The MDA's Region 5 and Region 6 have been working closely with the [MRLGA](#) through numerous workshops to develop the Murraylands and Riverlands LGA Water Position Paper to establish an informal and unified position on water in the Murraylands and Riverland region, and to support outcomes for the economy, society, and environment.

The development of the Water Position Paper is integral to the [MRLGA 2020-25 Strategic Plan](#) and will provide a platform for strategic advocacy for the region's water stakeholders.



FIND OUT MORE!

78th National Conference Motions and Engagement



The MDA's 2022 AGM brought together Local Government, Non-Local Government, and individual members to discuss the Association's performance, both financial and through resolutions, with the MDA Board, and to guide the Association's direction for the year ahead.

The MDA is already progressing the advocacy and engagement opportunities put forth in September, with several meetings with Ministers and Ministerial offices scheduled for 2022 and 2023!

At the AGM, new motions were put forth regarding the following:

- Environmental Water Account
- Moratorium on Agricultural & Horticultural Developments
- Menindee Lakes – RAMSAR Site
- Floodplain Harvesting Volume Cap
- Draft Western Regional Water Strategy Consultation
- Effects of Sea-Level rise
- Greater First Nations Involvement
- Progress Reporting on the 450GL Recovery Program
- NSW Water Resource Plans
- Circular Economic Project Funding
- Clarification of Annual Water Allocation Methodology
- "Benefit Cost Ratio" Requirements
- Ownership and access for cultural and Economic Purposes for the Basin's Indigenous Nations
- Exploring the Potential for Managed Aquifer Recharge
- The John Kell Proposal



FIND OUT MORE!



AGM MINUTES



PRESENTATIONS



Motions and Engagement: Progress

Progressing: Member Services, Leadership and Engagement, Science and Education, Corporate Development



Menindee Lakes – Ramsar Site *(Motion 6.3)*

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

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

Floodplain Harvesting Volume Cap *(Motion 6.4)*

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

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

Correspondence from **Mrs Deborah Frecklington:**

- Acknowledged that while farmers and producers often have state off the art technology, and manage their water efficiently, they often were up against organisations that exclusively focussed on resource trading, giving the resource traders an advantage over farmers/producers.
- Noted importance to be passionate about water, noted appreciation, that the MDA had reached out to their side of politics after many years.
- Indicated that they would like to be kept up to date on progress and engagement opportunities.

Correspondence from **Hon Kevin Anderson MP:**

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

Following the NSW election in 2023 the MDA is exploring new and ongoing advocacy opportunities.



FIND OUT MORE!



AGM MINUTES



PRESENTATIONS

Floodplain Harvesting Volume Cap *(Motion 6.4) cont.*

Correspondence from Hon Susan Close MP:

- Noted that the South Australian Government strongly supported regulating floodplain harvesting.
- Acknowledged the importance of using the Basin's Water Resources within the Basin Plan's sustainable diversion limits and that appropriate compliance action can be undertaken where required.

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

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

Correspondence from **Hon Kevin Anderson MP:**

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

Following the NSW election in 2023 the MDA is exploring new and ongoing advocacy opportunities.

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Effects of Sea-Level Rise (Motion 6.6)

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

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

Greater First Nations Involvement (Motion 6.7)

This motion's objective was threefold:

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

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

Correspondence from **Executive Director Zack Haddock**:

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

Greater First Nations Involvement (Motion 6.7) cont.

Correspondence from **Deputy Director-General, Phillip Brookes**:

- That Queensland Schools implement the Prep - 10 Australian Curriculum of eight learning areas (with many opportunities for teaching about past and present experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and dual-naming of locations with Queensland Council districts.
- The incorporation of the *Cross Curriculum Priority: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures* across the difference learning areas was another way that teachers can respect and recognise the knowledge systems of the world's oldest continuous living cultures.
- In the History learning areas, schools explicitly teach Indigenous History and are encouraged to incorporate the local perspective, providing opportunity to cover the history and present experiences of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their identities, and the continuing value of their cultures.
- Noted part of the QLD Government's commitment as placing Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples at the forefront of their decision making.
- Indicated that creating supportive environments where stakeholders feel empowered to act, allows the agency to move collectively in the same direction, and that the QLD Government works with each community to understand their unique knowledge and interests, whilst following the local cultural protocols of each of those communities.
- Noted that the QLD Government engages with community leaders to provide their permissions to share and better protect their Indigenous cultural intellectual property.
- Noted that QLD Schools manage naming conventions within the schools, including the use of First Nations languages to name new buildings or sports houses and signage using language of the Traditional Custodians. Indicated that replacement of existing signage was at the discretion of the school and was funded from within their budget.
- Shared some of the work that the Department was doing to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff, families, and communities. Noted that the Department has worked with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples to develop two important documents:
 - The [Commitment Statement](#), which pledges the QLD Government to develop a genuine understanding of our history and the lasting impact of colonisation on Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples and priorities respectful partnerships.

Greater First Nations Involvement (Motion 6.7) cont.

- The [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Action Plan](#), which commits the QLD Government to recognise First Nations histories and knowledge, and to provide cultural education for all departmental staff including teachers and principals.

Correspondence from **Assistant Secretary Shane Samuelson on behalf of the Minister for Education, Hon Jason Clare MP:**

- That the Australian Government was committed to First Nations people and recognises the importance of enshrining a Voice to Parliament in the Constitution which will enable First Nations people to provide advice to the Parliament in policies and projects that impact their lives.
- That the [Australian Curriculum](#), which sets high expectations and standards for what all students should know and be able to do, underwent a comprehensive review in 2021, and was endorsed by all state and territory governments in April 2022.
- Noted that the revised Curriculum includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures as a cross curriculum priority, embedding aspects of First Nations history and culture across all learning areas of the curriculum.
- That the Government will provide \$14.1million to place First Nations Educators in 60 primary schools to teach First Nations Languages and provide greater cultural understanding.
- That the Australian Government is committed to developing this initiative in partnership with First Nations communities, noting that First Nations partners will be placed at the centre of the plan and part of the decision-making process at every step of the way.
- That, as per the Government's election commitment, schools will be selected based on high enrolment of First Nations students and based on need.

Correspondence from **Hon Blair Boyer MP:**

- Notes that SA was a signatory to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap ([NACTG](#)) & was committed to a whole-of-government Implementation Plan, co-designed with the South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network ([SAACCON](#)).
- Noted that the Department of Education was working closely with the South Australian Aboriginal Education and Training Consultative Council ([SAAETCC](#)) & local First Nations representative bodies & cultural authorities to increase educational achievement for all students & promote increased cultural understanding/ reconciliation.

Greater First Nations Involvement (Motion 6.7) cont.

- Noted that the Department of Education (Department) had embarked on a 10-year [Aboriginal Education Strategy 2019-2029](#) to ensure that each Aboriginal young person is achieving their highest potential.
 - The Aboriginal Education Strategy commits the Department to working closely with South Australian Aboriginal Elders, cultural consultants, and communities to support the development of resources to support teachers to implement the Australian Curriculum.
 - Key initiatives include strengthening the delivery of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority in the Australian Curriculum.
- The Department's Aboriginal Workforce Plan commits the Department to building and growing the Aboriginal workforce within schools and the Department.
- Noted that the Malinauskas Government had committed to offering 400 University scholarships over four years at \$5,000.00 each to help with the cost of starting a teaching degree to several groups (incl. Aboriginal people), to study teaching.
- Noted that the SA Government was implementing actions through their Culturally Responsive Framework and Reconciliation Action Plan ([RAP](#)) to create schools and workplaces with culturally safe places to learn, work and thrive.
 - Indicated that the next iteration of the RAP was currently in development, with the MDA's proposals forwarded to the Working Group for consideration.
- Noted that the Minister had asked the Department, as well as TAFE SA, to look at how Traditional names could be added for the dual naming of locations on signs with a high confidence that this can be implemented for future signs.
- The Minister interest to the following pages for further information:
 - [Aboriginal Education initiatives](#)
 - [Aboriginal Workforce Plan 2021-2031](#)
 - [Culturally Responsive Framework](#)

Correspondence from **Hon Linda Burney MP:**

- Noted the prioritisation of First Nations policy and commitment to implementing the 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart in full, including holding a referendum to enshrine a First Nations Voice in the Constitution and establishing the Makarrata Commission that will oversee a national process of truth telling and agreement making.

Greater First Nations Involvement (Motion 6.7) cont.

- Noted that the Australian Curriculum provided the ability for educators to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in their classrooms with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures Cross-Curriculum priority.
- The Minister provided the following link to the [Australian Curriculum](#) for further information.

Correspondence from **Hon Kyam Maher MLC:**

- Indicated that the Department for Education has produced the Aboriginal Education Strategy 2019-2029. Identified one of the strategy's five principles as Culture and Identity.
- Indicated that funding for the inclusion of Aboriginal names for locations was usually the responsibility of local government.

Correspondence from **Gabrielle Williams MP:**

- Noted support for every Victorian child to learn about the diverse, rich cultures of First Peoples on whose land they live and learn.
- Indicated that, to achieve this vision, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures are incorporated into the Victorian Curriculum F-10, with teachers needing to follow protocols for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, known as the Koorie Cross-Curricular Protocols.
- Noted that Victoria was the first jurisdiction to commit all elements of the Uluru Statement from the Heart: Voice, Treaty and Truth.
- Indicated that the [Yoorrook Justice Commission](#) (Commission) - the nation's first, formal truth-telling process - was inquiring into both historic and ongoing systemic injustices committed against First Peoples, and will likely make recommendations about the Victorian school curriculum.
- Noted that Geographic Names Victoria supports naming authorities across Victorian to partner with Traditional Owners to name roads, features and localities in Aboriginal languages, that the VIC Government has worked in partnership with the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria to establish the elements required to support the negotiation of a future state-wide Treaty and local treaties, which might include the assigning of Traditional names to locations throughout Victoria.
- Noted that the VIC Government has been clear that when it comes to Treaty, nothing is off the table.

The MDA is awaiting further correspondence and, following the NSW election in 2023, is exploring new and ongoing advocacy opportunities.

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

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

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

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

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



FIND OUT MORE!



AGM MINUTES



PRESENTATIONS

NSW Water Resource Plans (Motion 6.9)

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

Correspondence from **Hon Tanya Plibersek MP:**

- Noted that the Minister had not ruled in or out options that can help ensure robust plans are in place in NSW as quickly as possible. This includes the step-in powers under the *Water Act 2007*.

The MDA is exploring further avenues of advocacy.

Contact the Murray Darling Association

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

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Circular Economic Project Funding (Motion 6.10) cont.

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

Progressing this, the MDA has written to the Basin Governments.

Correspondence from **Hon Susan Close MP:**

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

Correspondence from **Hon James Griffin MP:**

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

Circular Economic Project Funding (Motion 6.10) cont.

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

- Noted that the QLD Government had established the Office of Circular Economy within the Department of Environment and Heritage Policy and Programs. Indicated that this was building on the QLD Waste management and Resource Recovery Strategy and was backed by the \$1.1b Recycling and Jobs fund.
- Noted that at present the focus for investment of the Recycling and Jobs fund with Local Governments in QLD was establishing resource recovery infrastructure across regional QLD, including organics processing facilities.
- Indicated that there would be additional opportunities to engage with the Department on projects and strategies to enhance the Circular Economy as new programs were rolled out.
- Identified that a state-wide program for education and behaviour change had commenced and would focus initially on improving recycling outcomes for households.

Following the NSW election in 2023 the MDA is exploring new and ongoing advocacy opportunities.

Clarification of Annual Water Allocations Methodology (Motion 6.11)

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

Progressing this motion, the MDA has engaged with the NSW Minister for Lands and Water, Hon Kevin Anderson MP, and is awaiting further correspondence. Following the NSW election in 2023 the MDA is exploring new and ongoing advocacy opportunities.

Benefit Cost Ratio (Motion 6.12)

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

Progressing the motion's objective, the MDA has engaged with the Federal Government Minister for the Environment and Water, Hon Tanya Pliibersek MP, The Shadow Water Minister Senator Perin Davey, as well as State Water Ministers and Shadow Ministers. Following the NSW election, the MDA is exploring evolving avenues of advocacy.

Correspondence from **Hon Glenn Butcher MP:**

- 'Queensland bulk water opportunities statement – Part A – Strategic framework' (QBWOS), published in 2017, outlined the QLD Government's framework for sustainable regional economic development through better use of existing bulk water infrastructure and effective investment in new infrastructure.

Benefit Cost Ratio (Motion 6.12) cont.

- Noted that QBWOS included an objective 'Consider projects that will provide regional economic benefits,' meaning the QLD Government already has scope to consider projects that would provide regional economic benefits despite a preference for projects which provide a commercial return and a BCR greater than one.
- The Minister provided the following links to the [Business Case development framework](#) and [Project Assessment Framework](#) for further Information.

Correspondence from **Mrs Deborah Frecklington:**

- The Shadow Minister indicated that the LNP had taken a policy regarding the Benefit Cost Ratio Requirements to the last election, and fully supported the MDA's advocacy on this.
- The Shadow Minister noted that achieving this would be very difficult, as the BCR was set in Federal Policy.

Correspondence from **A/g Branch Head Lachlan Simpson:**

- Acknowledged that Water Security is critical for strong communities, for responding to Climate Change, supporting agriculture, and securing Australia's future. That the Aust. Government was committed to making responsible investments in improving water security for all Australians.
- The National Water Grid Fund was the Government's infrastructure investment program to improve water access and security.
- Indicated that there was no BCR Requirements for projects to be eligible for National Water Grid funding. The National Water Grid Investment Framework sets out their approach to infrastructure investment, with funding decisions informed by the overall economic, social, environmental costs and benefits of the project.

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

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

The MDA has engaged with the Basin State Water Ministers, as well as the DELWP Deputy Secretary Terry Garwood.

Correspondence from **Hon Glenn Butcher MP:**

- Indicated that the QLD Government remained committed to implementing the Murray-Darling Basin Plan 2012 (Basin Plan) on time and in full, including a commitment to continue to work with Traditional Owners across the QLD Murray-Darling Basin to understand cultural values and uses of water.

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

- Noted that in 2018 the [Queensland Water Act 2000](#) was amended to recognise the importance of water resources to Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples, separate from social, economic and environmental outcomes, building on existing mechanisms in the Water Act that provide a statutory right to take or interfere with water for traditional activities or cultural purposes.
- Indicated that QLD has three Water Resource Plans in the Basin accredited by the Australian Government as being consistent with the Basin Plan.
- Identified that on-country engagement with Traditional Owners provided important insights to support development of the Water Resource Plans, and led to the development of the Report '[Water Connections Aboriginal People's Water Needs in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin – A guide to the water plans in the Condamine and Balonne, Border Rivers and Moonie catchments.](#)'
- The QLD Government is committed to build on the report's foundations & continue to engage with Traditional Owners across the State to understand flow requirements to support cultural values, uses & provide First Nations peoples' ownership of water.
- Indicated that the Department of Regional Development, manufacturing and Water (the Department) was committed to looking at options where it can further support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' access to water in QLD.
 - Noted that the Department had already progressed a special reserve of water in Cape York, whereby eligible persons could claim a share of this water by requesting a water licence, at no cost and no ongoing entitlement fees. Cape York Peninsula Heritage Area water licence can be held by:
 - entity that holds Aboriginal freehold land, (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Corporation/ land trust), or Native title holder such as a registered native title body corporate
- Indicated that the Department would continue to work with Traditional Owners in the QLD Murray-Darling Basin to implement the water plans in the Condamine and Balonne, Border Rivers and Moonie, and Warrego, Nebine, and Paroo catchments. This included releasing unallocated water reserved in the water plans to help an Aboriginal community achieve its economic and social aspirations and continue on-country engagement to improve the community's understanding of flow requirements to support cultural values and uses.

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

Correspondence from **Hon Susan Close MP**:

- Indicated that the SA Government recognised the role that freshwater systems have to the culture and identity of Aboriginal people, as well as the role that Aboriginal people occupy as owners, custodians, and guardians of water.
- Noted that the South Australian River Murray and South Australian Murray Region Water Resource Plans contain further information about objectives and outcomes for the management of water on Country.
- Indicated that at a whole of Basin level, Ministers agreed at the October 2022 Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council on the need to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people.
- Noted that Basin officials are continuing work that is aimed at addressing the barriers to the delivery of water entitlements for First Nations people.

Exploring the potential for Managed Aquifer Recharge (Motion 6.14)

This motion's objective was separated into three parts:

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

The MDA has engaged with State Water Ministers, DELWP Secretary & Deputy Secretaries.

Correspondence received from **Hon Glenn Butcher MP**:

- Acknowledged that Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR) was a well-established technology that is used as a water management solution across QLD, with the oldest and largest MAR scheme in Australia managed by the Lower Burdekin Water Board in the Burdekin River Delta.
- Indicated that Sunwater uses MAR in several of its water supply schemes incl. the Callide Valley and Lockyer Valley, that Origin Energy also operated a large MAR scheme in the Surat Basin near Roma.
- Noted that while the significant potential for using MAR to manage water supplies in parts of WLD' Murray-Darling Basin was well understood, there are no active investigations into further recharge schemes being undertaken by the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water.
- Indicated that the QLD Government supports the use of MAR technology where it is demonstrated to be an effective solution to water management or water supply issues.

Exploring the potential for Managed Aquifer Recharge (Motion 6.14) cont.

Correspondence from **Hon Susan Close MP**:

- The SA Government recognises the benefits of Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR) as part of contemporary water management, with SA being internationally recognised for its use of stormwater for non-potable purposes through MAR.
- Indicated that the [South Australian Water Security Statement \(2022\)](#), as well as the [Water Allocation Plans](#) for the [River Murray Prescribed Watercourse](#) and the [Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges](#), contain further information about water management principles, modelling outcomes and the further MAR opportunities under investigation.

Correspondence from **Hon Kevin Anderson MP**:

- Indicated that the NSW Government, via the NSW Water Strategy (Section 6.8), has committed to:
 1. **Identify** and implement the legislative changes, accounting, assessment and approval processes that are needed to enable MAR to be implemented
 2. **Provide guidance** on where MAR could be a feasible option given the scientific and engineering challenges and potential environmental implications, particularly for those locations where supplies are vulnerable/ where demand is high compared to supply.
 3. **Collaborate** with research institutions to ensure we have the latest scientific information available to government, the wider community and industries.
- Indicated that the NSW Government has committed funding and started a project to develop a policy framework, with one of the first steps being to undertake a scoping exercise and background research, incl. learnings from how other Australian and overseas jurisdictions carry out MAR projects.
 - Noted that within Australia, MAR schemes are prevalent around Perth and are used extensively in South Australia, in both Urban and Rural contexts, and to a lesser degree in other states.
- Noted that there were some significant policy challenges for NSW "...given [the state has] one of the most evolved water management frameworks in Australia, but also have some heavily used groundwater systems." The Minister noted that these systems support existing users of natural groundwater and become critical supply sources for stock, domestic, agricultural, and industrial activities and groundwater dependent ecosystems during dry periods.
- Indicated a need to create opportunities for cost-effective and efficient water storage, with the approach to MAR needing to account for considerations such as:

Exploring the potential for Managed Aquifer

Recharge (Motion 6.14) cont.

- Access to groundwater by holders of existing water rights/entitlements
- Volume and timing of when water is injected and/or filtrated into an aquifer, when it is later extracted.
- Minimising water quality issues, risks of aquifer clogging
- Licencing, approvals, accounting frameworks, incl. what assessments are required to ensure MAR proposals are valid and safe
- The decay factor that should apply
- The need to consult with a broad range of stakeholders within the community, incl. water users, councils, research institutions, environmental groups.
- Indicated that the Department of Planning and Environment is leading the project and is currently putting together communication materials to further explain the project and its expected timing of the policy framework's development.
 - Noted that a dedicated website will be set up where the MDA and other organisations will be able to review additional information and stay informed of progress.
- Noted that further information on the NSW Government's approach was set out in the recently released NSW Groundwater Strategy.
 - Referenced Action 2.3.3. which seeks to foster innovative groundwater solutions such as MAR to support communities and industries.
 - Indicated that under Action 2.3.3. the NSW Government was working with the CSIRO to map MAR opportunities across NSW, providing information about where MAR could be possible across the Basin.
 - Indicated that the project was co-funded by the National Water Grid and would be completed in 2023.
- The Minister noted that if the MDA required additional information, or wished to discuss MAR policy framework project, to contact the following:
 - **Mr Andrew Goulstone**, Manager Water Policy and legislation.
Tel: [0409 652 515](tel:0409652515)
E: andrew.goulstone@dpie.nsw.gov.au

Correspondence from **Dr Carol Grossman, DCCEEW**, on behalf of Hon Tanya Plibersek MP:

- Acknowledged the MDA's dedication to engaging with the challenges involved in managing the Basin.

Exploring the potential for Managed Aquifer

Recharge (Motion 6.14) cont.

- Indicated that ensuring a sustainable and healthy Basin was critical for the livelihoods and welfare of millions of Australians in the face of the combined challenges of climate change, population growth and increasing agricultural demand.
- Australian Government was working collaboratively with the States, Local Governments, First Nations, and Basin Communities to implement the Basin Plan to protect this valuable resource and encourage new ideas to collectively manage the Basin.
- Agreed that MAR has significant potential to improve security of water supply in many parts of Australia, with the Government progressing MAR opportunities via projects funded through the National Water Grid Authority Science Program
 - Noted a [rapid appraisal](#) of MAR opportunities for agriculture was completed by the CSIRO in 2021, the project identifying 6 prospective agricultural areas with storage opportunities greater than 50GL, including on the Lachlan River, Macquarie River, and Namoi River.
- Noted current MAR projects underway:
 - Implementation of a pilot MAR scheme near Myalup in WA
 - Investigation of the potential for MAR in the Katherine region of the Northern Territory
 - A desktop study to advance potential MAR schemes in NSW
 - A CSIRO project on cost effective clogging management in MAR schemes.
- Indicated that the NWGA Science Strategy sets out goals, themes of work and arrangements for guiding Science Program investments. In general, projects must be brought forward by state or territory governments to be considered for funding.
- Indicated that additional future Science Program projects to progress MAR opportunities in the Basin could be considered for funding if the relevant Basin state were to submit a funding proposal.
 - Advised that the MDA and its members may want to contact the respective State Governments to discuss their interest in possible future proposals.
- Advised that more information on the Science Program, including a link to the Science Strategy, was available via this [LINK](#).
- Indicated that the Government looked forward to engaging and working closely with the MDA to safeguard the Basin for future generations.

The John Kell Proposal (Motion 6.15)

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

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

The MDA is exploring alternative avenues of advocacy.

Programs and events: Progressing Advocacy and Engagement!

The MDA has continued to progress Motions and goals outlined in the Vision 2025 strategic plan through programs and events across the Basin.

The [Northern Basin Forum](#) (scheduled for Late 2023) will be exploring *Water Security across the Northern Basin*.

The [79th National Conference](#) 27-28 September 2023, will bring together delegates from across the Basin, exploring *Partnership through collaboration and engagement across the Basin*.



2023 CONFERENCE

Supporting the MDA's ongoing advocacy and engagement regarding Motions raised at past Murray Darling Association AGMs, the **Northern Basin Forum** and **79th National Conference** offer an unparalleled platform to unite all corners of the Murray-Darling Basin, engaging communities at a national level, guiding advocacy, representation, and engagement.



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