



Board Meeting 410 Minutes

16 August 2021

Murray Darling Association Incorporated
ABN 64 636 490 493

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Meeting Commencement Time

9:30am

Zoom Meeting Log in Details

[ZOOM LINK](#) *(Meeting ID 867 8794 9686, log in details are also included the diary appointment)*

1. Attendance

1.1 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 Brian Lockyer	Barunga West Council	Region 8
Cr Glen Andreazza	Griffith City Council	Region 9
Cr Phyllis Miller	Forbes Shire Council	Region 10
Cr Craig Davies	Narromine Council	Region 10A
Cr John Campbell	Gunnedah Shire Council	Region 11
Mayor Samantha O'Toole	Balonne Shire Council	Region 12
Peter George	M&S Group	Treasurer
Emma Bradbury	MDA	CEO

1.2 Apologies

1.3 Declarations

CEO Emma Bradbury has declared a direct, but non conflicting, non-financial interest in item 6.11.

2. Confirmation of Previous Minutes

Motion:

Moved: C. Davies

That the minutes of MDA Board Meeting 409 held on 28 June 2021 be accepted as an accurate record.

Seconded: J. Campbell Carried

Refer to - Attachment 2

3. Reports

3.1 Chairman's Report

3.2 Chief Executive Officer's Report

CEO provided her report

Refer to Attachment 3.2

Motion:

Moved: B. Thomas

That the CEO's report be noted.

Seconded: C Davies Carried

3.3 Finance Reports

Reports are provided for June and July 2021.

Refer to Attachment 3.3

Motion:

Moved: P George

That the financial reports be noted.

Seconded: P. Raison Carried

3.4 Introductions

Cr Glen Andrezza was welcomed to the board, with board members each providing an introduction and welcome.

Cr Elstone was also welcomed to the board, having also attended last month Committee of Region Chairs meeting.

4. Correspondence

4.1 Incoming

Refer to Attachment 4.1

Date	Received From	Subject
26/07/2021	Fiona Wright, Branch Manager	MDBEDP III Project applications status update.
14/07/2021	Paris Lord – ALGA	Thankyou for attending the National General Assembly 2021
05/08/2021	Emma Bradbury	Letter of Resignation

4.2 Outgoing

Refer to Attachment 4.2

Date	Issued to	Subject
02/07/2021	Hon. Troy Grant, I/Inspector Gen Rachel Connell, DAWE Phillip Glyde, MDBA Hilton Taylor, CEWO Jane Coram, CSIRO	MDA Resolutions and Workplan
05/07/2021	Matt Pinnegar New CEO of ALGA	Letter of congratulations on new role
06/07/2021	The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP Deputy Prime Minister Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development	Letter of Congratulations on appointment to position of Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the Nationals Party. MDA AGM Resolutions 2021
11/08/2021	Bridgett Leopold Deputy Interim Inspector General of Water Compliance	Letter of congratulations on new role
11/08/2021	Adj Prof Max Finlayson	Letter of Engagement

Motion:

Moved: J. Campbell

That the correspondence be received and noted.

Seconded: C. Davies

Carried

5. Business Arising

5.1 Board Resolution Register

This item carried forward.

5.2 Project Funding Applications Update

The MDA has submitted five projects for funding under the CIP to the Commonwealth relating to

Basin Community Leadership Program – (Round II): building leadership skills, networks and resilience to enable communities to adapt and thrive in response to changes in water availability, climate and technologies to ensure a vibrant future for regional economies.

Regional Economic Diversification Program: Leading diversification of regional economies within the Basin through the formulation of Regional Economic Diversification Plans, and identifying and developing local, industry lead projects that will stimulate economic activity and long-term employment outcomes in times of changing water availability

Climate Ready and Water Secure Regions: creating a suite of regionally specific but aligned water secure reports to support communities to be climate ready, and to support Basin governments to make strategically aligned and efficient decisions on infrastructure investments, projects and initiatives. The Climate Ready and Water Secure Regions Reports will provide a roadmap for Basin governments to support our communities through the implementation of the Basin Plan and beyond.

Murray-Darling Basin Resilience Scorecard: that will empower local government, business and communities with local data and ideas to drive resilience, economic development and prosperity in the Murray Darling Basin.

Murray-Darling Basin Local Government and Communities Centre of Excellence – to create a hub from which local government can collaborate with related agencies, the Basin States, the Commonwealth Water family, and with each other.

These projects are all designed to work individually or together to

- Create local jobs and build resilience in rural and regional communities impacted by drought, changing water availability and emerging trends in agriculture and industry.
- Provide knowledge and education to identify and develop viable economic alternatives
- Promote regional collaboration and community engagement
- Build social and economic resilience in Basin communities during demanding times e.g. drought, bushfire, floods, climate change.
- Support regional communities to constructively contribute and respond to policy changes at regional and Basin scale.
- Be a valued source of reliable data and information between community and Basin governments and agencies.
- Complement the existing network of engagement officers currently working with the MDBA and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office.
- To build trust, confidence and empowerment in the decisions of government in the implementation of the Basin Plan.

The MDA has a unique capacity to bring a “whole of Basin” perspective to planning matters and economic development, while also contributing a wealth of local knowledge and solutions to Basin wide issues.

Earlier this month the CEO contacted the Ministers office for a status update and was advised that the projects remain under consideration (see correspondence in). Project partners have been advised accordingly.

Further, this information was also presented to the Basin Officials Committee as part of a paper tabled by NSW.

Motion:

Moved: M Rebbeck

That the update be noted.

Seconded: P Miller

Carried

5.3 Over-recovery of Water in the Macquarie-Castlereagh and Gwydir Rivers

At Board meeting 460 the board received and noted a report from Inland Rivers, tabled by Cr Jane MacAllister. The Report recommended ***“that the MDA not support the concept of ‘over-recovery’ in the Macquarie-Castlereagh and Gwydir valleys.”***

At that meeting the board also noted that there is no expectation for the MDA to form a position on this issue at this stage and is continuing to develop a greater understanding of the issue.

The board discussed this issue and resolved that it will be helpful for the MDA to establish a position on this matter.

Motion:

Moved: T Elstone

That consistent with the findings of the Productivity Commission Inquiry Report 2018 the MDA acknowledge that

i) As a result of the uncertainty that the Australian Government has faced over the exact water recovery targets, it is possible that parts of the Basin will be found to be over recovered against local SDLs.

ii) Holding excess environmental water represents an ‘opportunity cost’ in lost agricultural production. If environmental benefits are marginal or negligible for some held water (for example, because of delivery constraints that cannot be lifted, or limited connectivity to downstream environmental sites) it is reasonable to suggest that some water held by the CEWH (in excess of water recovery targets) may not represent an efficient allocation of resources.

iii) Any attempts to transfer over recovered water to the efficiency measures program should not be countenanced in areas where water cannot meaningfully contribute to the environmental objectives of that program in the southern Basin.

iv) No judgment should yet be made about whether over recovery has occurred — but that the MDA continues to support a clear process for determining whether or not over has occurred and if so dealing with over recovery. This process requires two steps.

1. Assess the extent and location of any identified over recovery.
2. Determine a pathway for the CEWH to return water to the consumptive pool.

Seconded: C Davies

Carried

6. General Business

6.1 Submission to Basin Officials Committee

The MDA in collaboration with the NSW State Government developed a report which was presented to and discussed by the BOC at their August 5 meeting.

- **note** that the Murray Darling Association are keen to work with BOC to assist in furthering the strategic priorities of the Committee and that of the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council
- **agree** that the Murray Darling Association be invited to the next BOC meeting to detail a proposal on how a funding contribution from Basin governments will support the activities required to engage local government and communities in water reform and Basin Plan implementation.

Following that meeting the MDA has received an invitation from the BOC to speak at the next BOC meeting, currently scheduled for 16 September 2021.

The BOC have agreed to hear from the MDA on how Basin governments might better support the activities required to engage local government and communities in water reform and Basin Plan implementation.

The meeting will be via videoconference on MS Teams, with about 10 minutes to speak, with further details to be confirmed closer to the date.

Motion:

Moved: G Andreazza

That the MDA continue to work with BOC to identify ways in which Basin Governments can support the activities required to engage local government and communities in water reform and Basin Plan implementation.

Seconded: S O'Toole

Carried

6.2 Regional boundaries and structural governance

The board discussed that this item has been under active consideration for many years, and that any review of regional boundaries must reflect a contemporary governance structure that contemplates a 'whole of local government sector' approach.

The CEO notes that she had commenced discussions with the new CEO of ALGA on this topic. Cr Miller noted that, as a board member of ALGA she would encourage MDA to present to the ALGA board.

The CEO noted that state and federal governments want to know, when working with the MDA, where the MDA 'fits' in the regional/state/national framework of local government.

Any strategy to review the regional boundaries should also consider the structural governance of the MDA to create alignment horizontally across the local government sector, and vertically through all three levels of government.

The CEO noted that some options for consideration included

- One model may be to form a skills based board comprising a seat for each of the Basin state LGA's and the ALGA, under which the current board of the MDA sits as a Committee of Region Chairs, acting as a technical advisory committee.
- Another option is to shuffle that model sideways and have a skills based advisory committee comprising a seat for each of the Basin state LGS's and the ALGA which works alongside the board of the MDA and acts as a conduit between ALGA and MDA.

Cr Rebbeck noted that any strategy must have input from the regions.

Motion:

Moved: P Raison

That the MDA

- continue to work with ALGA and other local government peaks and agencies to identify ways in which local government can work stronger together to encourage Basin Governments to support the activities required to engage local government and communities in water reform and Basin Plan implementation.**
- Request a presentation to the board of the ALGA**
- refer the matter for comment and consideration to the Strategic Advisory Committee.**
- Provide any further recommendations back to the board.**

Seconded: P Miller

Carried

6.3 OneBasin CRC

The OneBasin CRC bid, in which the MDA was a key partner as unsuccessful in Round 22. The Bid Team, led by Mike Stewardson of Melbourne University have resolved to sharpen and resubmit the bid in Round 23.

With changes in staffing and resources, **the MDA has not renewed any financial or resource commitment but remains a lead agency in supporting and informing the new bid.**

Motion:

Moved: B Thomas

That the MDA

- Remain committed to partner with the OneBasin CRC by providing support and perspectives of local government**
- Review financial commitment in collaboration with Mike Stewardson after the next MDA budget.**

Seconded: P. Miller

Carried

6.4 First Nations Advisory Committee

The board discussed Our Strategic Plan Vision 2025 – Goal 2.3.5 which commits the MDA to Establish a First Nations Advisory Committee and that Motion 5.10 of the 2021 MDA National Conference resolved that the Murray Darling Association support a process to promote greater representation of First Nations people in local government and in water policy.

It was noted that any committee must develop a framework to ensure balanced representation across Basin nations.

The CEO has held preliminary discussions with Cr Greg James, City of Greater Shepparton, Vicki Walker, Yorta Yorta Elder and Rob Walker, Yorta Yorta Elder with a view to forming a committee to progress both these objectives.

Cr Thomas expressed concern that the MDA does not have a standing item on Board and region meetings to acknowledge country.

Motion:

Moved: B Thomas

That the MDA

- a) **Acknowledge country as a standing item on all MDA board agendas**
- b) **invite Cr Greg James, Vicki Walker, Rob Walker to form the inaugural MDA First Nations Advisory Committee to provide advice on progressing the MDA's objectives as described in the MDA Strategic Plan and the resolutions of the MDA general meetings,**
- c) **write to the Chairman of Yorta Yorta Aboriginal Nations to invite participation on the committee at an organisational level, and**
- d) **Develop Terms of Reference for the committee consistent with those for the Strategic Advisory Committee.**

Seconded G. Andrezza

Carried

6.5 Adjunct Professor Max Finlayson

Adj Professor Max Finlayson has been engaged to work with the MDA on a volunteer basis in a newly created role.

The purpose of the role will be to lead the formation of the MDA CSIRO Projects Steering Committee; to support the ongoing relationship and bid development with OneBasin CRC bid team; to progress work on the Climate Ready and Water Secure Regions project and to identify opportunities for projects and initiatives.

The role will report to and work closely with the CEO. See the CEO's report for further details on Max's experience and objectives in the role, and correspondence out for the terms of engagement.

Motion:

Moved: B Thomas

That the board

- a) **Thanks Adj Prof Max Finlayson for his generous offer to contribute his time and incredible expertise to the MDA.**

- b) welcomes Max to the MDA.
- c) notes the term of engagement as outlined in the letter of engagement.

Seconded: J Campbell **Carried**

6.6 Nomination – Life Member

The MDA has received expressions of interest for two nominations for Life Membership.

Both regions have been invited to complete the MDA Life Membership nomination form and include a concise package of any supporting documentation including photos, bio, publications, events, and anecdotes to support the nomination.

Motion:

Moved: M Rebbeck

That the board note expressions of interest and the process for Life Member nominations.

Seconded P. Raison **Carried**

6.7 Code of Conduct

Draft Code of Conduct for Committee Members, Delegates of Council, Council Advisors and the Procedure for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct circulated 28/06/2021 seeking comments or amendments for the board's consideration and further discussion

Motion:

Moved: J Campbell

That the MDA adopt as policy the Code of Conduct for Committee Members, Delegates of Council, Council Advisors and the Procedure for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct.

Seconded: B Thomas

6.8 MDA Basin Communities Leadership Program

Due to the impacts of Covid 19 the MDA has sought and been granted by the funding body a variation to contract to extend the delivery of the Leadership Program in the Southern Basin. The workshops will now be held virtually or in person – subject to prevailing restrictions, in Victoria in September, and in South Australia in October.

6.9 Australian Local Government Association National General Assembly

For the last three consecutive years that the ALGA NGA has run, the MDA has exhibited, providing an opportunity to engage with our members and to raise the profile of the MDA.

All exhibitors are invited to re book for the 2022 National General Assembly, with a 5% discount on the booth if booked before Friday 26 November 2021. The cost for the 2022 NGA exhibition is \$4,200 including GST. Further costs to the MDA include officer time, travel, accommodation, and expenses.

A decision on whether or not the MDA exhibits in 2022 will be made closer to the event.

6.10 MDA Privacy Policy

The draft MDA Privacy Policy was provided to the board for review and approval.

Motion:

Moved: S O'Toole

That the Board adopt the MDA Privacy Policy

Seconded: B Thomas Carried

6.11 Recruitment of Chief Executive Officer

After more than 7 years in the role CEO Emma Bradbury has resigned her position. Emma was appointed to the position at Board Meeting 340 on 21 May 2014.

In October 2020 the CEO notified the board, at [Board Meeting 403](#) and the membership of the MDA, in [Basin Bulletin #39](#) of her intention to hand over the reins at the conclusion of her third contract in September 2021.

On Thursday 5th August the Chair and board received the CEO's letter of resignation, effective upon the recruitment of a successor.

Engagement of a properly qualified recruitment agent will enable the board to identify and target the right skills mix and person to take this organisation to the level.

Motion:

Moved D Thurley

That the board

- a) Accept the resignation of the CEO Emma Bradbury, and
- b) Receive and note the recruitment proposals
- c) Engage Blackadder & Associates
- d) Commence recruitment of a new CEO

Seconded: C Davies Carried

7. Submissions

7.1 NSW Select Committee on Floodplain Harvesting

The board commended the MDA Submission to the Select Committee on Floodplain Harvesting, noting that the submission reflected the adopted positions of the MDA on the issues under consideration, and that is also aligned with the positions of organisations as diverse as Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientist, Macquarie River Food and Fibre, and South West Water Users Association.

Motion:

Moved: C Davies

That the board adopt the MDA Submission to the Select Committee on Floodplain Harvesting.

Seconded: G Andrezza Carried

8. Guest Presentation

8.3 The Hon Melinda Pavey MP, NSW Minister for Water & Jim Bentley – CEO Water Division.

Minister Pavey thanked the MDA for the work they do, and noted that while recent rains have eased some pressures it is essential for government and communities to continue the work of planning for future droughts, mitigating and managing climate change, securing town water supplies and looking after our environment.

Jim Bentley provided a detailed presentation on the Better Barka and Better Bidgee strategies and provided an update on the progress of the FPH legislation, all with a strong focus on supporting increased connectivity rather than significant increases in contributions the Murray system.

Jim Bentley will provide a package of key facts and messages that his department are working on.

9. National Conference

9.1 Albury 2022

Table the Minutes of the first Committee meeting.

Recommended venue - Albury Entertainment Centre.

Availability is for the 20 - 21 Sept 2022.

Theme – Water Security and Infrastructure Planning and Investment

Action:

That the Board Members consult with their regions and provide feedback to the next meeting to confirm the proposed dates and theme.

10. Confidential items

The board considered a confidential item.

11. Meeting Close

The Chair to declare the meeting closed at 12.30pm