



Chief Executive Officer's Report
September 2020

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1. Introduction

It is with great pride in the achievement of the team, the Board, and the members of the MDA that I reflect on the delivery this month of a truly outstanding 76th National Conference and AGM. With the challenges of Covid-19, a very limited budget, and minimal resources the benefits of collaboration, ingenuity, belief and good old-fashioned hard work showed through in great measure, delivering an apparently seamless conference and AGM and experience.

From the City of Greater Shepparton to the speakers, the board to the staff, the service providers to the delegates, we were truly blessed with an abundance of talent and exceptional people to make this, in the greatest Olympic tradition, the best conference ever.

With the excitement of the conference now subsiding, the strength of purpose arising from the AGM is beginning to rise to the fore, setting a clear pathway for the MDA for the year, and years ahead.

With the adoption of the Strategic Plan: Vision 2025 and the motions passed at conference the MDA has firmly set a clear pathway to deliver on our purpose and provide value for members, stakeholders, and the community over the coming years.

Essential to any good strategic plan is strong and stable succession, and that is something I am clearly committed to.

With the success of this event and the adoption of the new strategic plan, I have provided notice to the board that the 76th National Conference will be my last as CEO. It is my intention work hard over the coming year, with the board, to implement the first year of the strategy, and to identify and engage the right person to take the Murray Darling Association, indeed the Murray-Darling Local Government Association if motion 2020-5.18 is given effect, boldly into the future. The right person will have not only skills and experience but will have aspiration for themselves and for the MDA.

It is my intention to hand over the role formally at or before the 77th National Conference in 2021. That said, as so many of you are aware, a commitment to the MDA tends to be a commitment for life and I will look forward to continuing to contribute to the values of the organisation well beyond my tenure as CEO.

2. Appointments

Date	Event/meeting	Location
04/08/2020	Kristen Clark – Whyalla Council	Zoom
06/08/2020	Minister David Speirs SA Minister for Environment and Water and Stuart Peevor Ministerial Adviser	Teams
06/08/2020	Mr Luke O’Sullivan – Senior Adviser to DPM The Hon Michael McCormack	Phone
07/08/2020	Region 6 Ordinary Meeting	WebEx
12/08/2020	Truth Agency – National Conference discussions	Zoom
14/08/2020	ORIMA Research Interview - Water Information Requirements	Phone
14/08/2020	Truth Agency – National Conference	Zoom
14/08/2020	Region 11 Ordinary meeting	Zoom
19/08/2020	Cr. Chris Bilkey – Murray River Council – BCLP Wakool	Moama
20/08/2020	Regional Alliance Meeting – Yorke and Mid North SA	Zoom
20/08/2020	Region 1 meeting Albury City Council, Towong Council, and Indigo Shire Council	Zoom

20/08/2020	Truth Agency – National Conference	Zoom
24/08/2020	Bax Audio and Visual – National Conference	Zoom
25/08/2020	Peter Cullen Trust	Zoom
26/08/2020	Sir Angus Houston and Phillip Glyde MDBAA	Teams
27/08/2020	Central NSW Joint Organisation Meeting	Zoom
28/08/2020	Prime 7 Interview – National Conference	Zoom
31/08/2020	Win News Shepparton – National Conference	Zoom
31/08/2020	Corowa Loch Proposal	Zoom
03/09/2020	One Basin CRC Co-Design Meeting – First National Engagement	Zoom
08/09/2020	MDA Region 4 AGM and Ordinary Meeting	Zoom
08/09/2020	The Truth Agency – National Conference	Zoom
08/09/2020	The Hon Susan Ley MP, Minister for Environment (informal)	Moama
09/09/2020	CSIRO - Carmel Pollino and Nicole Emara	Zoom
10/09/2020	BCLP – Wakool Workshops	Wakool
11/09/2020	BCLP – Wakool Workshop	Wakool
14-16th Sept 2020	National Conference and AGM	Virtual
17/09/2020	Region 9 Ordinary Meeting	Zoom
17/09/2020	One Basin CRC Co-Design – Basin Foresight	Zoom
18/09/2020	Conference debrief and Year ahead – Board MDA	Zoom
21/09/2020	Wentworth Group - MDB Roundtable	Zoom
21/09/2020	Canberra University and Wentworth group	Zoom
23/09/2020	Murraylands/Riverland Water Position	Zoom
28/09/2020	Wentworth Group – Round table	Zoom
29/09/2020	Inspector General’s Office Ramzi Jabour and Brendan Murphy	Zoom
01/10/2020	Orano JO Meeting	Narramine
02/10/2020	Region 2 Ordinary Meeting	Zoom
02/10/2020	Chris Olszak and Joseph Lorimer AITHEr	Zoom
15/10/2020	BCLP – Warren Workshop	Warren
16/10/2020	BCLP – Warren Workshop	Warren
19/10/2020	Brewarrina Council – Jeff Sowiak and Phil O’Connor	Brewarrina

3. Meetings

Presentation to Orana JO - Narramine

Emma Bradbury and Mayor Phyllis Miller - Meeting with the member councils of the Orana JO in Narramine provided an opportunity to showcase the benefits of membership to the MDA in pursuing regional interests.

The MDA also facilitated the attendance of DPIE to provide context for and take feedback from councils on the recently released regional water strategies.

Options for the regional boundary realignment were also discussed. Acknowledging the challenges of scale for Region 10, Narramine Mayor Craig Davies, Chair of the Orana JO welcomed the opportunity to work with the MDA to head up and chair a new region, 10a comprising the same councils as the JO.

Canberra

The Chair David Thurley and I will travel to Canberra in November to meet with Ministers Pitt and McCormack, and the Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment following the conference to discuss resolutions and objectives of the MDA.

4. 76th National Virtual Conference and AGM – 14th – 16th September 2020

Conference Analytics

The Murray Darling Association held its 76th National Conference on the 14th and 15th of September on a virtual platform Provided by Bax AV. Provided are some data analytics and information regarding the conference.

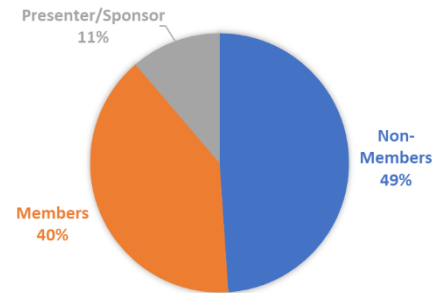
Registration Numbers:

Total Registrations 231, Breakdown:

Non-Member → 113 (48.9%)

Member → 92 (39.8%)

Presenter/Sponsor → 26 (11.3%)



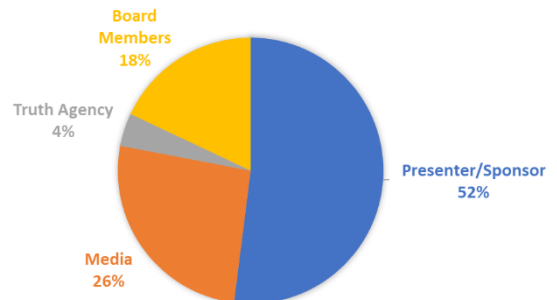
There were 40 attendees that were complimentary registrations:

Presenter/Sponsor: 26

Media: 13

Truth Agency: 2

Board Members: 9



Live Stream Numbers:

Average viewers at and one time: 90-150

Peak viewers: 149

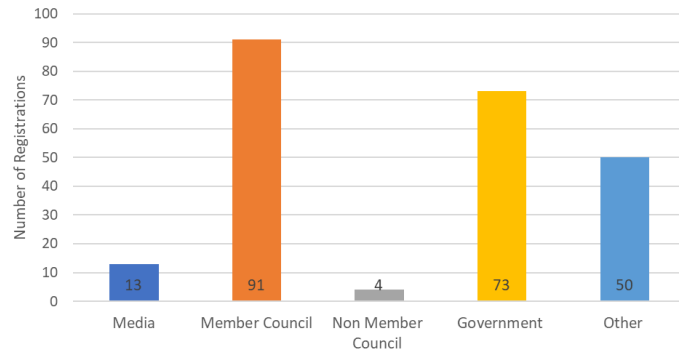
Average view time: 95minutes

Total Questions asked: 315

Total questions answered: 66

Breakdown of Attendance:

The bar chart is a summary of the data presented in the table below. The MDA would like to note the significant attendance numbers from Government departments. An increase from last year and a clear indicator of the perceived value the conference delivered.



Following the 2020 National Conference, the MDA sent out a feedback survey to all delegates. Here is a summary of their feedback.

Have you previously attended an MDA Event prior to the 2020 Conference?

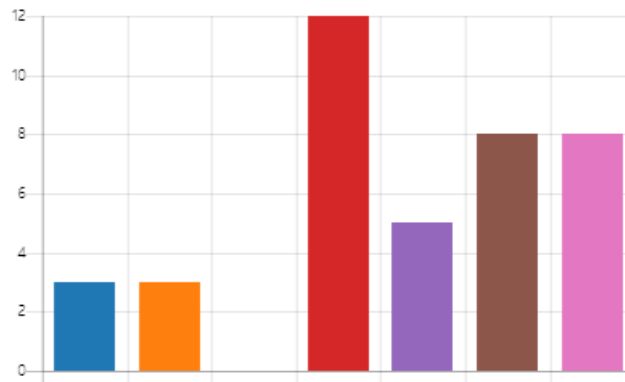
Yes: 14

No: 18



Where did you hear about the MDA 76th National Conference 2020?

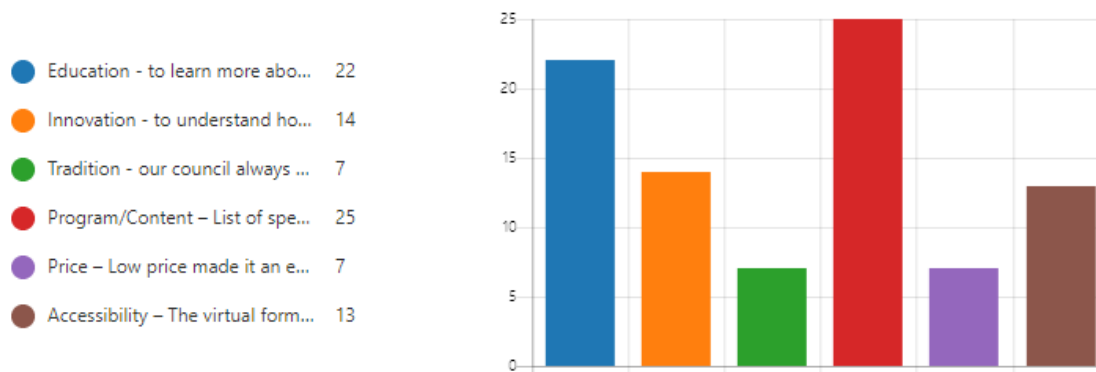
- MDA website 3
- Facebook 3
- Twitter 0
- Direct email 12
- Word of mouth 5
- I have attended a previous co... 8
- Other 8



The MDA sent out a promotional pack to all councils prior to the conference. Was the material in this pack useful for you in choosing to attend the conference?

Yes: 17

No: 5



What attracted you to attend this conference? (please select as many as apply)

Do you plan on attending the MDA National Conference in 2021?

Yes: 30

No: 2



What is your preferred Conference format?

Virtual:

Face-to-face:

Hybrid:



Key takeaways from the feedback on this:

- Substantial feedback received giving preference to face-to-face conference and providing justification as to why this is so.
 - However, this was broken down into those solely calling for a face-to-face conference.
 - Also, those who prefer a face-to-face but acknowledged the value of a virtual or hybrid conference, due to budget and time constraints of travel and ability to reach a wider audience.
- Was also positive feedback for the way in which the virtual conference was delivered and ongoing support to continue this in future conferences.

What presentation/s did you find most valuable? Why?

- The most popular presentation looked to be Chris Olzak's from Aither with much of the feedback to this question either including him or talking about his presentation.
 - "Chris Olzak - it gave an economists perspective from someone with a deep understanding of the topic."

- *Other popular presentations included those from both Sir Angus Houston and Phillip Glyde from the MDBA, Tim Flannery, Fiona Simson, Mick Keogh from the ACCC and Minister Pitt.*
 - *“Aither, MDBA, ACCC and Minister Pitt - obviously have a particular interest in water”*
- *There were also multiples of feedback complimenting the entire arrangement of presentations.*
 - *“It was all excellent and well balanced. The video was excellent”*

What subject matter or other content would you like to see included at the next MDA conference?

- *There was ongoing support for the presentations delivered and topics covered however some feedback received called for deeper dives into some of these topics:*
 - *“Research underway across the basin and how it is shaping policy. A panel of state decision makers. How some of the commonwealth announcements are progressing Discussion about sustainable agriculture in a changing climate Greater understanding across the Basin of the challenges facing each of the jurisdictions and Basin communities and authentic dialogue about balancing the competing and complementary needs.”*
 - *“To be honest, I liked that there was the big range of speakers to reflect all positions and sides, including Indigenous. But I particularly was interested in the science behind (ecology, social, economic). Great to have the students involved as well. Big plus.”*
- *There were some calls for more focus into what is happening with the darling river and how this is affecting the whole system.*
 - *“How to increase water flows into the Darling for the benefit of the Southern Basin”*
 - *“Where the water goes. Explain all the water allocation holders, their percentages etc., and how the water is used and where.”*
 - *“Compliance and monitoring”*

5. Basin Community Leadership Program

On the **10th and 11th September**, the MDA facilitated the two-day face to face workshop in Wakool 10 participants applied and attended the Wakool workshops, varying in ages from 21 – 57 years covering a variety of backgrounds and skill sets. Each participant resides in the Wakool region or close by and understand their community and associated issues.

The following mentors attended the workshop in Wakool either via zoom teleconference or face-to-face:

- Senator Perin Davey – Via Zoom
- Mayor Chis Bilkey – Murray Shire Council
- Hilton Taylor – Commonwealth Environment Water Office
- Hayley Purbrick – Tahbilk Wine Manager
- Katrina Myers – Barham Avocados and Spokeswoman

The workshops scheduled for Collarenebri have been postponed which were schedule for the 12th and 13th October 2020 due to lack of participant registration. Harvesting of crops impacted the delivery. New date will be scheduled to combine with the opening of the QLD border and the Dirranbandi and St. George workshops.

On the **15th & 16th October**, the two-day face-to-face workshops will have been held in Warren NSW, engaging 13 participants with Mayor Cr Milton Quiqley – Warren Shire Council and Michael Wrathall from the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office as Mentors for the workshop.

On 30th September 2020, the MDA forwarded to the Department of Agriculture for review and compliance purposes the first milestone report on the project.

6. Operational Update

Trainee Georgia Andrews-Mill resigned advising she is moving away from the area.

Georgia extended her appreciation for the opportunity to work at the Murray Darling Association for the past 6 months, adding

During this time, I have thoroughly enjoyed the atmosphere within the team, and I will miss our interactions. I have learnt so much regarding water, the Murray-Darling Basin and met so many inspiring people along the way.

Emma Bradbury



Chief Executive Officer