



Murray Darling Association Inc.

Ordinary Meeting of the Board

Monday 22 February 2021, 10:35am

admin@mda.asn.au
www.mda.asn.au
T (03) 5480 3805
ABN: 64 636 490 493
250 Anstruther Street
P.O. Box 1268
Echuca, Vic 3564

MINUTES - MEETING No. 406

1. ATTENDANCE

1.1. Present

Cr David Thurley	Albury City Council	Region 1
Cr Bronwyn Thomas	Federation Council	Region 2
Cr Jane MacAllister	Wentworth Shire Council	Region 4
Cr Melissa Rebbeck	Alexandrina Council	Region 6
Cr Andrew Tilley	City of Mitcham	Region 7
Cr Brian Lockyer	Barunga West Council	Region 8
Mayor Paul Maytom	Leeton Shire Council	Region 9
Mayor Phyllis Miller	Forbes Shire Council	Region 10
Mayor 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:

Cr Peter Raison – Region 5

1.3. Declarations

Nil

2. PREVIOUS MINUTES

2.1. Meeting 405 held via Zoom, Monday 21 December 2020

MOTION: That the minutes of Board meeting 405 are approved as an accurate record of that meeting.
M Rebbeck / P Maytom **CARRIED**

3. REPORTS

3.1. Chairman's report

Chair, D Thurley provided his monthly report including that the Chair and CEO met with Troy Grant, who is the new Inspector General, the role will commence in July 2021.

3.2. Finance reports

Peter George, Treasurer, provided a summary of the December 2020 and January 2021 financial reports and a recap of the previous year's financial performance.

Discussion items included:

- Job keeper eligibility – the MDA was not eligible for job keeper; however, the organisation was eligible for the cashflow boost. The two recent funding announcements will be reviewed by Peter George.

MOTION: That the financial reports for December 2020 and January 2021 be received
P George / P Miller

CARRIED

3.2.2 Draft 2021/2022 Budget (Business Arising Agenda Item 5.2):

Peter George provided an overview of the draft 2021/2022 budget and cashflow analysis, it is essential that projects and grant funding continues to improve cashflow. A number of projects have been identified to apply for project funding.

The CEO advised the four project submission papers have been prepared including supporting letters. There are also several additional projects ready for submission when funding is available. The CEO commending both Cathy Keegan and Peter George for the work undertaken in preparing the budgets under multiple scenarios. The CEO has some confidence funding will be favourable for these projects.

Discussion items included:

- M Rebbeck declared an interest in common, and queried whether state funding can be applied for i.e. Regional Development Victoria, and whether there is the opportunity to employ consultants to facilitate projects, apply for grants etc.

The CEO advised based on the strategic plan, this model will be adopted for project delivery, to retain key staff and engage consultants or employees on a contract basis.

MOTION: That the draft 2021/2022 budget be adopted

B Lockyer/ C Davies

CARRIED

3.2.3 CEO Performance Review

The Chair proposed for a CEO Performance and Remuneration committee be established to formalise and complete the CEO's current performance review, finalise the two outstanding years and the benchmarking review for the role. Back payment for remuneration will be required.

MOTION: That the Board establish a CEO Performance and Remuneration Committee

D Thurley/ P Maytom

CARRIED

Proposed CEO Performance and Remuneration Committee Members:

- David Thurley, Chair MDA
- Peter George – M & S Group
- Adrian Butler

MOTION: That the CEO Performance and Remuneration Committee consist of David Thurley (Chair MDA), Peter George (M & S Group) and Adrian Butler

C Davies / P Maytom

CARRIED

3.3. Chief Executive Officers Report

The CEO provided a written report and provided an update of the recent 10-day tour with Craig Davies which covered 27 councils, three regional meetings and two regions, the tour was incredibly valuable.

National Conference – acknowledgement of the work the team has put in to develop and prepare the program and expressed appreciation to Wentworth Shire Council for their support. The program is nearing completion and registrations are starting to be received.

Leadership program – Engage and Create Consulting will be jointly facilitating the Cunnamulla, Dirranbandi, St George and Collarenebri workshops in March and April.

Science and Education program – the CEO is a panel member for the One Basin CRC project, a funding decision should be known within coming months.

The CSIRO are valuing the role of the MDA in bringing local government to the table.

Discussion items included:

- Does the One Basin CRC project fit in with the plan for the centre of excellence. The CEO advised the CSIRO is excited for the centre of excellence proposal, and the integrated approach with local government working together for sustainability capabilities.
- The One Basin CRC proposal will include 4-5 adoption hubs managed by committees. The CEO has also been nominated as the Chair of overarching committee.

- 10 day tour - positive discussions were held with all councils visited and Nyngan Shire Council has indicated they will become a member of the MDA.

MOTION: That the CEO's report be noted

D Thurley/P Miller

CARRIED

Cr O'Toole Region 12 left the meeting

3.4. Region reports

Region 1 (Cr David Thurley): written report was provided, discussion also of non-member Councils and possible inclusion of Wagga Council in Region 1.

Region 2 (Cr Bronwyn Thomas): written report was provided, feedback has been sought from member councils regarding the proposed name change, and possible motions for the AGM. The region is also eager to secure indigenous representation on the group committee hopefully for the April meeting.

Region 4 (Cr Jane MacAllister): written report was provided; and an update was also provided on the NSW upper house inquiry visit to Broken Hill and the Menindee Lakes. The region is also looking forward to the National conference and the ability to showcase the region and Menindee lakes to participants. There are also currently severe blue green algae blooms in both rivers; tourism numbers also increased during COVID-19. The region will be seeking a review of the resumption of the pumping rule that was recently implemented.

Region 6 (Cr Melissa Rebbeck): written report was provided. The healthy river healthy basin wetland day was hugely attended, with key messages including recovery since the millennium drought and a tour of the barrages with some key MDBA representatives attending. The ability to observe the issues in each other's regions is important. A symposium is planned for the region on 13-14 October 2021 to showcase water use efficiency and opportunities. Region 6 are also interested in hosting the 2022 national conference.

Region 7 (Cr Andrew Tilley): meeting was held last Thursday, the CEO attended via Zoom with good member attendance. The region will be assisting Region 6 on the symposium and also the National conference tours.

Region 8 (Cr Brian Lockyer): Barunga West Council has decided to withdraw from the MDA and B Lockyer will no longer be able to participate as the region's Chair, the CEO has been advised. Discussion of the benefits of MDA membership including the ability to present a stronger voice for the betterment of the upper regions of the Murray. B Lockyer will be submitting a report to council after the national conference and with the support from council's CEO to rescind the motion and retain council's membership. Mr Lockyer has enjoyed being the Chair of Region 8 and a part of the MDA.

Region 9 (Mayor Paul Maytom): a meeting was held last week, unfortunately there were no representatives from the MDBA. The presentation at Griffith had 80 attendees, supporting in principle to find out more information on the proposal. Clarification was sought on whether the Chair can provide a presentation at the national conference. Region 9 will also be submitting a motion for the proposal. The Chair suggested the region chair discuss this with the CEO and provide further information.

Updates were also provided on additional meetings attended including the Regional Water Strategy meeting, where key areas discussed included ensuring coordination with WaterNSW and the 20 year Infrastructure Options Study. Clarification was sought on whether the MDA can link in and connect with this committee.

Murrumbidgee Customer Advisory Group – WaterNSW (CAG) meeting - NSW irrigator councils are opposing the water charges and are seeking further information.

P Maytom is standing down at the October Council elections and a representative will be decided after the election.

Proposed MDA name change - Murrumbidgee Council is opposed to the proposed name change. It was requested that the CEO contact Murrumbidgee Council.

ACTION: CEO to contact Murrumbidgee Council to discuss further.

Region 10 (Mayor P Miller): lot of meetings attended regarding water and raising of the wall at Wyangala Dam.

Region 10A (Cr Craig Davies): written report was provided. Tour around JO with the CEO was productive and expressed compliments to the CEO for her involvement. It is understood that all Councils have agreed to join as MDA members. It is important that councils get on board, to understand the diversity of issues across the regions. Strength in numbers will make things happen in the water sphere in regional Australia.

Region 11 (Cr John Campbell): meeting held last week. Inverell may be joining as an MDA member following attendance at the meeting. COVID restrictions will have to be monitored for the national conference.

Fly in arrangements – there are no COVID restriction issues if guests go straight from the airport to the conference. Council is arranging busses to collect guests from the airport to minimise risks.

ACTION: CEO to circulate communications to members regarding the fly in arrangements

CEO thanked C Davies and J Campbell for assistance and support for the tour around the northern basin, which was very productive for regions 10A and 11. There appears to be a significant shift in reception from councils in this region. It would be beneficial to undertake similar tours in region 8 before June/July. There are now six NSW Chairs on the Board, with strong representation also from SA. The priority now is to establish region 3 in Victoria.

Region 12 (Cr Samantha O'Toole): no report provided.

MOTION: That the Chairman's report, finance reports, Chief Executive Officers report and region reports are noted.

J MacAllister / J Campbell

CARRIED

3.5. Communication and Briefing reports

3.5.1 Delegates Report

Received and noted. The Delegates report will be issued to all delegates to circulate to all councils.

3.5.2 Strategic and Operational Priorities 2021

For noting

3.5.3 HR Staff Induction Policy Framework

The CEO advised James Marshall is continuously working on building the MDA's policy framework and this policy is presented for noting.

3.5.4 MDBEDP Round 3 Funding Guidelines Feedback

MDA was invited to provide feedback on the guidelines, and there is some confidence of receiving grant funding for the MDA project.

3.5.5 Briefing Paper – Strategic Advisory Committee

For noting

3.5.6 Briefing Paper – Regional Boundary Alignment

For noting

Discussion items included:

- MDBEDP Round 3 Funding – clarification was sought on whether there was any content on water use efficiency and water flows, with the CEO advising there are two funding streams available, and feedback was provided on the community investments package.

MOTION: That the reports be noted.

J Campbell / C Davies

CARRIED

4. CORRESPONDENCE

4.1. Correspondence Out

Item	Recipient	Topic
4.1.1	Welcome Letter to Ms Lynda Yates (Region 7)	Individual Membership
4.1.2	Victorian Mayors and Councillors	Congratulations on your election/re-election
4.1.3	The Hon Sussan Ley MP	Murrumbidgee River – Yanga Lake Connectivity Optimization Project
4.1.4	The Hon Melinda Pavey MP	Murrumbidgee River – Yanga Lake Connectivity Optimization Project
4.1.5	Mr Rene Woods – MDBA	Welcome Letter
4.1.6	Wentworth Shire Council	Pooncarie Weir
4.1.7	Commonwealth Environmental Water Office – Jody Swirepik	Murrumbidgee River – Yanga Lake Connectivity Optimization Project
4.1.8	Balranald Shire Council – Letter of Support	Murrumbidgee River – Yanga Lake Connectivity Optimization Project
4.1.9	Mildura Rural City Council	MDA Membership Value
4.1.10	Alpine Shire Council	MDA Membership Value
4.1.11	Mr Phillip Glyde - MDBA	MDA National Conference
4.1.12	Mr Dennis Patterson	Immediate Past Chair
4.1.13	Minister Keith Pitt	Over-recovery of water in the Macquarie-Castlereagh and Gwydir valleys

4.2. Correspondence In

Item	From	Topic
4.2.1	City of Wagga Wagga	Construction of a new and larger Burrinjuck Dam
4.2.2	Wentworth Shire Council	Proposed Name Change
4.2.3	Phillip Glyde – MDBA	Re: National Conference
4.2.4	The Hon Mark Coulton MP	National Conference Motions
4.2.5	The Hon Michael McCormack	National Conference Motions
4.2.6	Blair Boyer MP – Parliament of South Australia	Inclusion of Water Literacy in the Australian Curriculum.
4.2.7	The Hon James Merlino MP – Deputy Premier Victoria	Inclusion of Water Literacy in the Australian Curriculum.
4.2.8	Cr Fiona McAllister – Mayor Yarra Ranges Council	Thank you for Congratulation Letter.
4.2.9	Mr Rene Woods – MDBA	Thank you for Congratulation Letter.
4.2.10	The Hon David Littleproud	Response to Motions
4.2.11	Wentworth Shire Council	Pooncarie Weir response letter
4.2.12	Campbelltown SA	Name Change
4.2.13	Fair Trading NSW	Change to Constitution
4.2.14	Berri Barmera Council	Name Change
4.2.15	Leeton Shire Council	Name Change
4.2.16	The Hon John Gardner MP	Water Literacy – Education Curriculum
4.2.17	City of Tea Tree Gully	Name Change
4.2.18	City of Burnside	Name Change – nonrenewal of membership

The CEO advised that it is worth noting the engagement with Minister McCormack, for establishing a committee with local government on national water infrastructure investment, which is a key motion from the 2020 National Conference.

Discussion items included:

- Region 6 motion on carbon neutrality and carbon sequestration, is there any other feedback from Minister McCormack? The CEO advised a direct response has not been received to date however, it is increasingly informing the conversation and dialogue at a national level.
- Strategic Advisory Committee (item 3.5.5) – discussion of previous concerns raised regarding the lack of a board member on the committee, and clarification was sought on who is the chair of the committee. The CEO advised that the Chair is Brenton Lewis, and the briefing paper outlines the role and value of the Strategic Advisory Committee to the MDA and connection to the strategic plan. The current board member representative is Peter George however, the board can review this appointment.

Continued discussion of the function and activities of the advisory committee, representatives and the reporting process to the board. A report was requested to be presented to the next board meeting addressing these concerns and financial implications.

ACTION: CEO to provide a briefing report on the functions and activities of the Strategic Advisory Committee to the next board meeting, with the report to address the concerns raised.

The CEO reiterated that this month's report provides a summary of the function of the committee, and that there are no out of pocket expenses or commitment of administration time for the MDA.

MOTION: That the Board receive the correspondence.

C Davies / B Lockyer

CARRIED

5. BUSINESS ARISING

5.1. Review of Actions Table

For noting

MOTION: That the Board note the updates.

A Tilley / B Lockyer

CARRIED

5.2. Draft Budget

Refer to item 3.2.2.

5.3. Lower Darling River Flows

For noting. CEO thanked Mr Bob Stuart for the work undertaken on the joint media release.

MOTION: That the Board note the joint media release – Lower Darling River Flows

J Campbell / M Rebbeck

CARRIED

6. GENERAL BUSINESS

6.1. Strategic and Operational Priorities 2021

Discussion items included:

- Region 6 is not supportive of boundary realignments. Extensive work has been undertaken to secure new council memberships and these councils could possibly be allocated to another region. The Chair advised that the boundary realignment request has come from regional NSW and confirmed that boundaries will not change in every part of the basin.
- Renaming of regions – region 6 also suggested that each region should be renamed to make them easier to identify.

MOTION: That the Board

a) Note the following strategic priorities and operational objectives for 2021:

- i. align strategy and objectives
- ii. work with LGA/ROC/JOs to develop consistent assessments, case studies and experience to inform MDA regional and national positions of advocacy, and
- iii. The MDA support the LGA/ROC/JOs by raising the profile of local government and the peaks with the Commonwealth and supporting advocacy to the Commonwealth.
- iv. Create regional efficiencies and Basin-scale projects, capability, and positions.

b) Refer this item to the next meeting of the Strategic Advisory Group for awareness and noting.

P Miller / B Lockyer

CARRIED

The Chair also reiterated that the discussion points will also be included in the review.

6.2. Board Meeting Schedule 2021

Discussion of the proposal to restructure the board meetings and establish a Committee of Regional Chairs to improve board efficiencies and information sharing capabilities.

Feedback included:

- The proposal is a good idea as it will allow more focus on addressing regional issues and opportunities for each region.
- The model provides opportunities for the board to spend more time on strategic issues.
- Meeting timings – clarification was sought on whether there is opportunity to change the meetings to later or earlier in the day

ACTION: Administration to undertake a doodle poll to ascertain the board's receptiveness to change the meeting times

- The board briefing pack and information provided should also be reviewed.
- Constitution requires eight board meetings annually. The CEO advised the proposal meets the constitution's requirements.

MOTION: That the Board:

- i. Establish a Committee of Regional Chairs consisting of such members to represent their regions in the role of chairs.
- ii. Meet bi-monthly as a Committee of Regional Chairs for the purpose of knowledge sharing, regional development and inter-regional collaboration.
- iii. Allow attendance of regional committee members and secretariats to the meetings of the Board as Committee of Regional Chairs
- iv. Allow attendance of external parties to the meetings of the Board as Committee of Regional Chairs by invitation.
- v. Meet bi-monthly every other month as the full board of the MDA for the purpose of conducting core business and making decisions.
- vi. Adopt the following meeting schedule for 2021.
 - a) Full board of the MDA – board members be polled and after that an appropriate start time be established on the third Monday of Feb, April, June, August, October, and December.
 - b) Board as Committee of Regional Chairs – the third Monday of March, May, July, September, and November.

J Campbell / D Thurley

CARRIED

6.3. Macquarie-Castlereagh Over-recovery Briefing

Discussion of the Macquarie-Castlereagh Over-recovery meeting that will be held on 23 February with Minister Pavey, the Chair, CEO and C Davies. Additional Ministerial meetings will also be sought to address this issue.

Discussion items included:

- Flood plains harvesting information should be considered, and evidence of over recovery needs to be shown. The Chair advised the intention of the meeting is to seek greater clarity on the issue, including flood plain harvesting, licensing, regulations, amounts and flows.

The CEO advised that there has been a recovery in excess of what was intended under the Basin Plan, and it was made clear by the Productivity Commission that this was an issue that has been identified but a solution has not been determined. Water reform has to benefit and impact communities equitably.

- MDA's position on the Macquarie-Castlereagh Over-recovery – there is no expectation for the MDA to form a position on this issue at this stage, intention of the meeting is to seek a greater understanding of the issue. It was requested that the board should be informed on both sides of this issue and requested that the Inland Rivers Network Briefing paper provided by J MacAllister be noted.

MOTION: The briefing be received and noted on the Macquarie-Castlereagh Over-Recovery

J MacAllister / B Lockyer

CARRIED

6.4. Fair Trading NSW

The CEO advised motion 5.1 from the 2020 National conference to amend the constitution to address the use of technology for region, board and national meetings of the MDA has been registered with Fair Trading NSW and is now completed.

Discussion items included:

- Australian Productivity Commission Report – clarification was sought on whether a report will be presented to the board. The CEO advised not at this stage however, the board can resolve to make a submission to the commission. James Marshall has been reviewing the paper and will circulate information to the board in the next week. Jane Doolan from the Australian Productivity Commission has also been invited to present at the national conference.
- ICAC Report – clarification was sought on whether the 15 recommendations from the ICAC report have been collated and circulated. Question was taken on notice.

MOTION: that the item be noted

J Campbell/ C Davies

CARRIED

ACTION: Australian Productivity Commission report be reviewed and circulated to the board.

ACTION: ICAC report recommendations to be collated and circulated to the board.

7. GUEST PRESENTATION

Due to timing conflicts this presentation was deferred to a future board meeting

8. MDA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

8.1. Conference 2021 – Wentworth

Process for presenters / speakers – the CEO advised invitations have been issued to presenters and sponsors, any recommendations from the board are welcome.

9. STRATEGY

Nil

10. ITEMS FROM THE REGIONS

- 10.1. Region Names:** refer to item 6.1 Strategic and Operational Priorities 2021 discussion
- 10.2. Region Logos / Letterhead:** clarification was sought on options for Region 6 to use for the upcoming symposium. A region naming protocol request is to be forwarded to CEO. It was also recommended that the items from the regions form be distributed to request a paper/briefing on region branding protocols.
- 10.3. National Conference 2022 2023:** Region 11 may be interested in hosting the 2023 conference, and there has been some interest for the 2022 conference including from region 6.
- 10.4. Cathy Keegan Resignation:** The Chair noted that C Keegan finishes at the end of February and acknowledged the hard work and dedication that she has put in during her tenure. The CEO also reiterated that Cathy will be a tough loss to the MDA.

MOTION: That the Board note and extend thanks to Cathy Keegan for her hard work and dedication during her tenure with the MDA

D Thurley / J MacAllister

CARRIED

11. CLOSE

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 12.38pm

DRAFT