



Chief Executive Officer's Report

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1. Welcome to a new year and a new decade

On returning to work amid the devastation of the bushfire crisis, I experienced an acute sense of *déjà vu*. 2019 had begun amid crisis surrounding the fish kills.

An overwhelming sense of helplessness and despair in the face of such significant and broadscale devastation is a very real risk. For our communities. For our staff. For ourselves.

However, these events instead served to galvanise the staff of the MDA to step up and take affirmative action to address the challenges, to do what we can and to be part of the solution.

On day one back in the office we reached out and provided support and welfare checks to each other and to our regions. We have established communications and a webpage providing links to critical emergency management information, support and recovery networks.

We have commenced work on ensuring the MDA is positioned to support our members and proactively contribute to better policy on the management of our precious Basin resources into the future. We are confirming the MDA's role as the trusted go-to in the development of Basin policy.

We have released draft of the MDA's first ever Climate Change Position Statement and Action Plan. And we have completed the long awaited draft of our Strategic Vision 2024.

In addition to this breathtaking schedule, we are continuing to develop an exciting array of funded project applications that, if successful will provide additional workload, capacity and value for our members in a modular framework across the year, and years ahead.

I would like to commend the staff of the MDA for an outstanding start to what promises to be an action packed year ahead for this organisation. I am consistently excited and truly humbled by their individual and collective contributions to what is emerging as one of the highest performing teams I have ever worked with.

We are determined that, with your guidance our role will be one of leadership, optimism and active support for our communities. Together we will achieve a healthier, more vibrant future as we continue to challenge our governments to do better in the development of Basin resource policy and practice.

2. Appointments

Date	Event/meeting	Location
12/12/2019	Professor Barry Hart – Connecting Rivers group	Zoom video link
13/12/2019	MDA Region 6 Ordinary Meeting	Zoom video link
19/12/2019	CSIRO – Nicole Emara	Zoom video link
20/12/2019	Discussions for re-engagement with Swan Hill Council	Zoom video link
08/01/2020	Kingfisher Cruise – Barmah Choke	Barmah
09/01/2020	South Australian Climate Ready Regional Conference discussions	Zoom video link
10/01/2020	EMFM Interview	Echuca
15/01/2020	76 th National Conference Site Visit	Shepparton
15/01/2020	National Indigenous Australian Agency	Shepparton

3. Basin Communities Leadership Project – BCLP

Project Update – JAN 2020:

Project Stages / Current status:

- | | | |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Stage 1) | Program Design and Development | <i>[Underway – Progressing]</i> |
| • Stage 1a) | Participant / Candidate Recruitment | <i>[Underway – Progressing]</i> |
| • Stage 2) | Leadership Program Delivery | <i>[Commencing May 2020]</i> |
| • Stage 3) | Community Project Delivery Support | <i>[Pending]</i> |
| • Stage 4) | Consolidation / Refurbishment / OILLS | <i>[Pending]</i> |

Progress Comments:

- The advertising and recruitment campaign have commenced across a range of platforms including social media, face to face promotion and mail outs. Enquiries are growing.
- Development of curriculum content is well progressed.
- The Learning Management System (LMS) under development and will interface with the MDA's to meet MDA requirements.

Risks / Opportunities:

- Opportunity – considering incorporation of small videos addressing the candidates from Ministers and key stakeholders (reinforces the candidates feeling of importance; and is a highly economical and yet effective way to deliver the right message in a standardised approach across 15 locations / occasions).
- Risks – successfully aligning all the key stakeholders and support networks to synchronise / support dates across the 15 x locations.
- Risks – impact of the Bushfire crisis on the program delivery is being monitored.

Guidance / Decisions Pending:

- Nil.

4. Projects and Partnerships

The MDA is continuing to develop a number of project opportunities in partnership with several stakeholders in the science and academic space. Further details will be available on completion of heads-of agreement and project JV arrangements.

Significant resources have been committed to the development of funded project applications under several funding programs including the Murray Darling Basin Economic Development Program – Round 2 and Building Better Regions.

Murray Darling Basin Economic Development Program – Round 2

The MDA and several organisations approached the Department of Agriculture due to current conditions within the Murray-Darling Basin and neighbouring regions, and in recognition of stretched resources throughout Basin states, to extend the closing date for applications to Round 2 of the Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program.

The Department has advised that the grant opportunity will now **close at 11.00pm AEDT on Thursday, 20 February 2020**, an extension of 4 weeks.

Round 2 of the program will provide up to \$15 million to support 31 communities impacted by water recovery across the Murray-Darling Basin.

5. Bushfire information page

An MDA webpage has been created at <https://www.mda.asn.au/resources/2020-bushfire-information.aspx> to provide a ready reference to a primary source information on emergency information, welfare, donations and financial support for communities across the Basin. I also reached out to several agencies and authorities including the offering the services of the MDA's network to provide relevant and useful communications.

6. 2020 76th National Conference – Shepparton – Victoria

Planning for the 76th National Conference is progressing. Collaboration with host council Shepparton has included a site inspections and selection of venues, meeting with MDA and council staff, and a reconnaissance and orientation of the study tour locations across the Barmah Choke.

MDA staff alongside Cr Dennis Patterson and Greg McKenzie from Greater Shepparton Council surveyed the Barmah Choke and State forest area whilst touring on the Kingfisher Cruise boat.

Commencement of logistical study tour points of interest and discussions were at the forefront of the visit.




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Chief Executive Officer