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**Murray Darling Association Inc.**

**Ordinary Meeting of the Board**

**10.00am – Thursday 24 March 2016**

**463 High St, Echuca, Vic (skype)**

**MINUTES - MEETING No. 356**

1. **ATTENDANCE**
   1. Present

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Cr David Thurley | Chair R1 | Des Bilske | Chair R2 |
| Cr Kevin Myers | Chair R5 | Cr Barry Featherston | Chair R6 |
| Cr Peter Jamieson | Chair R7 | Cr Paul Maytom | Chair R9 |
| Murray Wood | Chair R10 | Emma Bradbury | Chief Executive Officer |

* 1. Apologies

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mildura RRC | Chair R4 |  |  |

* 1. Declaration of Interests and Conflicts

None declared

1. **PREVIOUS MINUTES**
   1. Meeting held Sunday 21 Feb, 2016, Echuca.
2. **BUSINESS ARISING**
   1. **Code of Conduct and Duty Statement**

David reminded all board members who hadn’t yet done so to return their signed documents to the executive.

* 1. **Social and economic impacts assessment framework and methodology: MDBA**

MDA wrote to the MDBA noting that the MDA is keen to work further with the MDBA to promote and participate in the development of a structured and repeatable Basin Plan evaluation framework and methodology that can distinguish short term and one off impacts from the underlying performance of the Plan, against which a detailed assessment of the social and economic impacts – both as a whole, and on a region by region basis as appropriate, can be made.

MDBA responded that the 2015 SEIA Data Collection Project undertaken by MDA was intended to identify useful data held by local governments and to provide advice on the utility of this information for Basin Plan evaluation. The MDBA felt that the project fell short of meeting its intended outcomes, and the Authority is not seeking any further contribution from MDA of this kind at this stage.

The response further noted that the MDBA is currently thinking about the precise shape of the 2017 Basin Plan evaluation, using the framework already have place and the information currently being gathered gathering.

The board emphasized the importance of working well with the MDBA, noting that it is evident that while the Authority had to some extent ‘lost patience’ with the Association, there remained a strong appetite within both organizations to demonstrate and deliver mutual value.

**Motion**: That the MDA

i) Continue to advocate for the development of a structured and repeatable Basin Plan evaluation framework and methodology that can distinguish short term and one off impacts from the underlying performance of the Plan, against which a detailed assessment of the social and economic impacts – both as a whole, and on a region by region basis as appropriate, can be made

ii) This item be placed on all upcoming Region meetings

iii) The MDA invite the MDBA to provide comment on the draft Strategic Plan prior to it’s adoption, to strengthen the alignment between the organisations’ shared objectives.

B Featherston/D Bilske **Carried**

* 1. **Appointment of Chair – Region 3**

Discussions with councils across region 3 have seen a strong appetite to support the MDA, but no councils emerge with a clear position to take a leadership role for the region. Consideration was given to the proposal that Region’s 2 and 3 to merge.

* 1. **Letters from donors to the Foundation, requesting refund of gifted monies**

The MDA has received letters from several donors to the MDF, requesting a return of gifted funds intended for specific projects in the amounts calculated by Brian Grogan as at March 2014.

Investigation of Mr Grogan’s claims have noted that a scarcity of records on specific projects kept by the Foundation during the subject period has made it difficult to rely on anything but source documents (receipts and dispersals) to establish the veracity of the claims. All finances of both the MDA and the Foundation have been subject to rigorous audit.

The Chief Executive Officer and Finance Manager have contacted with the donors to ensure that we have a complete picture of any expectations on the money gifted, and to ensure that we maintain full confidence of all donors.

A recommendation will come to the next board meeting on correspondence and what, if any refunds that may be due to close this matter out.

* 1. **Draft Strategic Plan 2016-2019**

The board noted the first draft of the Strategic Plan.

Affirmed that the Strategic Plan articulates how and what we do, and seeks to ‘ask the questions’ rather than to be prescriptive. Some discussion on issues and comments from the regions in relation to matters related more directly to the Constitution than the Strat Plan, and the importance of ensuring a strong alignment between the two documents.

It was also noted that regions and members must be empowered to contribute to and inform any changes to the constitution, and not be disempowered by them.

Board members will provide some final comments on the draft, with a view to having those changes finalized, circulated back to the board via email before being distributed to members for comment by the end of the month.

**Motion:** That the Board

1. Note the Draft Strategic Plan 2016-2019
2. Authorize the Chief Executive Officer to distribute the Draft Strategic Plan 2016-2019 to members and associate members for comment, consistent with the process above.
3. Receive comments from the Regions by Monday 25th April

D Bilske/M Wood **Carried**

1. **ITEMS LAID ON THE TABLE**
   1. Dual memberships

Several items relating to the Constitution were discussed, including membership categories, the attendance at and contribution by members at meetings across multiple regions, membership approval and review processes, and the issue of dual memberships. Noted that it is important that the constitution picks up on and tightens up some of these areas that have left the organization’s processes open to interpretation in the past.

It was noted that correspondence has been sent to RK Lawyers, requesting a push on the draft constitution.

A more detailed discussion on areas of improvement, and the review of the constitution will be held at another time, with the recognition of the importance of retaining the intent, but tightening up the loopholes to provide clarity.

1. **REPORTS**
   1. Chief Executive Officer’s report

* Strategic Plan 2016-2019
* Region 5 Meeting – Skype
* Region 9 Meeting – Leeton
* Professional Development – Australian Institute of Company Directors summit
* Proposed north-west region road-show – May
* Volunteer – Nathan Gillies. Thanks the Board and has noted that he loves his job, and the work he does
* CSIRO – discussion
  1. Finance Reports

As attached

**Motion:** That the board note the Finance Reports

B Featherson/D Bilske **Carried**

* 1. Region Reports

Discussion about strategies to strengthen engagement and representation at the regional levels. It was proposed that the board meet bi-monthly as the Board of Management (BoM), with meetings every other month as a Council of Regional Chairs (CoRC) to strengthen the focus on regional issues and collaboration. It was considered this objective may be better served by the regular submission of a Regional Issues Paper by the region chairs to be noted in the reports section of the monthly board meeting. This may be an evolving process.

Emma requested that the regions consider their responses to the Report by the Senate Select Committee on the Murray Darling Basin Plan in advance of the next meeting.

The regions generally noted also a more open and accessible level of engagement being experiences by regions and member councils with the MDBA recently, particularly in the Northern Basin and welcomed this engagement and the opportunities it offers.

1. **GENERAL BUSINESS**
   1. **Albury office**

Albury City Council have offered the opportunity for the MDA to surrender the lease on the Albury Office by mutual agreement, and without financial penalty to either party.

With no current functional contribution to the operation of the organisation made by having the Albury Office, it was agreed that, consistent with the current strategy of running a lean, focused MDA, it is appropriate to close the Albury Office at this time.

**Motion:** That the Murray Darling Association

a) surrender the lease on the Albury office on terms to be negotiated by the Chief Executive Officer

b) continue to work with the Albury City Council to manage the MDA catalogue currently located at the Albury office

c) Writes to the Albury City Council to inform them of the decision, and thank the ACC for their continuing support and generosity during the transition.

d) surrender the Albury postal address, and have all mail directed to the Echuca office.

B Featherston/D Bilske **Carried**

* 1. **Regional engagement**

Emma raised the issue and sought some guidance and direction from the board in establishing some protocols around regional engagement, particularly in regards to invitations from member councils for the Chief Executive Officer to provide presentations to council.

It was determined that it is appropriate for the Chief Executive Officer to make presentations, and that whether this was with the regional chair, or on an executive level would be determined on a case by case basis in consultation between the Chief Executive Officer and the relevant RC.

Matters for consideration would include the availability of the Chair, the content and purpose of the engagement, and preferences of the requesting member council.

It was noted that the Board and Executive have a strong relationship, a clear understanding of the roles and a high level of mutual confidence and support on this issue.

* 1. **Adrian Wells letter**

A letter was received from Adrian Wells addressed to the Board dated August 2015 which appears not to have been distributed to, and was not acknowledged by the board at the time.

Emma noted her apologies will certainly go to Adrian for any oversight by the executive that may have resulted in the letter not being forwarded to the Board for their consideration, and noted that emails show that the letter was received and acknowledged by Greg Toll, and received by a number of regions.

**Motion:** That the MDA write to Adrian Wells, acknowledging his correspondence, apologizing for the oversight and thanking him for his years of dedicated service and achievements to the MDA.

P Maytom/D Bilske **Carried**

* 1. Shelly Scoular – Speak Up (for Water and Food)

A number of board members expressed some concern in relation to a decision taken at the RAMROC meeting of 2nd March to give the sum of $10,000 to a group known as Speak Up (for Water and Food) following a presentation by Ms Shelley Scoullar. In particular, the following matters are raised:

• After the presentation the presenter remained in the room while the proposal to give $10,000 was debated by delegates, making it difficult for delegates to discuss the application openly.

• The status and membership of the group or association is unclear from the information presented at the meeting,

• A draft budget is for the sum of $102,000 including $12,000 for administration was presented without sufficient detail to justify the expenditure of public/ratepayer funds,

• No mechanism of accountability for expenditure of funds has been provided,

• RAMROC member councils did not consider the role of the MDA as an advocate for communities in this situation.

It was noted that while it is not the role of the MDA to challenge the decisions, or processes of other organizations (RAMROC), the concern is that there is appears to be an inconsistency of standards, objectives and messaging being represented by representative organizations (that is MDA and RAMROC) on behalf of our member councils. There is also the opportunity to achieve better outcomes if the MDA and RAMROC work more closely together on matters of common interest for member councils.

Motion: That MDA, on behalf of MDA member councils who also hold membership with RAMROC, write to RAMROC seeking further information and clarification of the issues noted above.

1. **CLOSE** 12.15pm

\*\* Some difficulties were experienced with the skype connection, with some board members dropping in and out from time to time.