



Murray Darling Association Inc.

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MINUTES

74th Annual General Meeting
Thursday August 30th, 2018
Leeton Soldiers Club
Trust.Unity.Equity.GROWTH

1. WELCOME

1.1 Welcome - National President, Cr David Thurley

Cr Thurley welcomed delegates to the 2018 AGM and declared the meeting open at 3.30pm.

2. ATTENDANCE

2.1 Present

Heather Barclay	Rural City of Murray Bridge
Cr Julie Barrie	Coorong District Council
Cr Ross Bodey	Berrigan Shire
Emma Bradbury	Murray Darling Association
Mayor Norm Brennan	Edward River Council
Adrian Butler	Federation Council
Cr John Campbell	Gunnedah Shire Council
Cr Russell Campbell	Carrathool Shire Council
Andrew Crakanthorp	Riverina Water County Council
Mayor John Dal Broi	Griffith City Council
Cr Denis Davey	City of Playford
Cr Barry Featherston	Alexandrina Council
Cr Donald Forbes	Tenterfield Shire Council
Pauline Frost	Life member
Peter George	M+S Accounting
Cr Mark Hall	Lachlan Shire Council
Cr Wes Hall	Narrandera Shire Council
Cr Shirley Halls	City of Playford
Cr Stephen Heywood	Wentworth Shire Council
Mayor Barry Hollman	Bourke Shire Council
Cr Peter Hunter	Renmark Paringa Council
Rita Jackson	City of Playford
Andrew Johns	Gunnedah Shire Council
Cr Trevor Jolliffe	Balranald Shire Council
Cr Colin Jones	Berrigan Shire
Gerard José	Mildura Rural City Council

Cr Andrew Kassebaum	Berri Baramera Council
Jackie Kruger	Leeton Shire Council
Andrew Lawson	Albury City Council
Vern Leng	Coorong District Council
Cr Fred Longmire	Federation Council
Geoff Lucas	Lucas Mills
Cr Jane MacAllister	Wentworth Shire Council
Cr Ian Mann	Mid Murray Council
Shen Mann	Alexandrina Council
Cr Peter Mansfield	Moira Shire Council
Mayor Richard Marsh	Balonne Shire Council
Mayor Paul Maytom	Leeton Shire Council
Mayor Ruth McRae	Murrumbidgee Council
Adam McSwain	Edward River Council
Cr Jason Modica	Mildura Rural City Council
Mayor Jenny O'Connor	Indigo Shire Council
Cr Samantha O'Toole	Balonne Shire Council
Cr Dennis Patterson	Greater Shepparton City Council
Cr Geoff Pritchard	Snowy Valleys Council
Cr Alan Purtill	Balranald Shire Council
Cr Tony Quinn	Greater Hume Shire Council
Cr Peter Raison	Mid Murray Council
Cr Adriaan Sakko	Mid Murray Council
Cr Clem Schubert	Rural City of Murray Bridge
Cr David Shetliffe	Town of Walkerville
Cr Cor Smit	Snowy Valleys Council
Amanda Spalding	Hay Shire Council
Bede Spannagle	Riverina Water County Council
Brett Stonestreet	Griffith City Council
Cr David Thurley	Albury City Council
Cr Andrew Tilley	Mitcham City Council
Cr Frank Tuckwell	Alexandrina Council
Greg Verdon	Riverina Water County Council
Cr Jenny Webb	Forbes Shire Council
Cr George Weston	Leeton Shire Council
Cr Terry Weston	Greater Hume Shire Council
Greg Whorlow	Albury City Council
Cr Frances Young	Gwydir Shire Council
Cr Dino Zappacosta	Griffith City Council

2.2 Apologies

Michael McCormack	Deputy Prime Minister
David Littleproud	Federal Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources
Vickie Chapman	South Australian Deputy Premier
Mick Gentleman	Australian Capital Territory Minister for the Environment and Heritage
Lisa Neville	Victorian Minister for Water
Neil Andrew OAM	Chair, Murray-Darling Basin Authority
Mayor Paul Antonio	Toowoomba Regional Council
Lui Basile	
Richard Beasley SC	Senior Counsel Assisting the Commissioner, Murray-Darling Basin Royal Commission
Des Bilske	Murray River Council

Andrew Broad	Federal Member for Mallee
Mayor Dave Burgess	Mid Murray Council
Tony Burke	Shadow Minister for Environment and Water
Mayor Denis Clark	Northern Areas Council
Jenny Coppock	Australian Taxation Office
Julie Davies	Balonne Shire Council
Tim Fisher	Assistant Secretary, Murray-Darling Basin Policy Branch
Denis Flett	Chairman, Victorian Environmental Water Holder
Cr Tim Elstone	Wentworth Shire Council
Andrew Garratt	Manager of Water Relationships, New South Wales Department of Industry
Jim Geltch	CEO, Nuffield International
Mike Hammond	Maritime Division, New South Wales RMS
Professor Barry Hart	Emeritus Professor Monash University
Jo Haw	Gannawarra Shire Council
Michelle Head	Albury City Council
Mayor Melisa Hederics	Wentworth Shire Council
Terry Hillman	
Craig James	CSIRO
Cr Peter Jamieson	Port Adelaide Enfield Council
Peter Kozlowski	Wentworth Shire Council
Richard Lee	Albury City Council
Keith Loeser	
Margaret Killalea	Greater Hume Council
Mayor Neil Martinson	Renmark Paringa Council
Penny McGrath	Victorian Department of Justice
Mayor Tanya Milligan	Lockyer Valley Regional Council
Craig Moffitt	Murrumbidgee Council
Raymond Najar	Managing Director, Greenwood Holdings
Chris Norman	Chief Executive Officer, Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority
Don Oberin	Life member
Cr Steve O'Halloran	Balranald Shire Council
Cr Garth Palmer	City of West Torrens
Tony Pasin	Federal Member for Barker
Kevin Pell	Life member
Tim Peverell	New South Wales Transport – Roads and Maritime Service
Juliana Phelps	Towong Shire Council
Tony Piccolo	State Member for Light (South Australia)
Andrew Powell	Queensland Shadow Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning
Glenn Rappensberg	Alexandrina Council
Rob Rendell	Senior Fellow, RMGC Consulting
Michael Reneham	Murray Irrigation
Rebekha Sharkie	Federal Member for Mayo
Rod Shaw	Director, Federal Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
Josh Thomas	Senior Advisor, Federal Minister for the Environment and Energy
Mick Veitch	New South Wales Shadow Minister for Primary Industries, Lands and Western NSW
Bret Walker SC	Commissioner, Murray-Darling Basin Royal Commission
Peter Walsh	Victorian Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Regional Victoria and Decentralisation
Tim Whetstone	South Australian Minister for Primary Industries and Regional

Development

2.3 Declaration of Interests
Nil

3. PREVIOUS MINUTES

Motion: That the minutes of the 73rd AGM, held on October 12th, 2017 in Renmark, SA be adopted as an accurate record of that meeting.

Moved: Cr P Mansfield/Cr A Sakko **Carried**

4. REPORTS

4.1 2018 Annual Report

Motion: That the Murray Darling Association receive the Annual Report for the year ending June 30th, 2018.

Moved: Cr D Thurley/Cr D Shetliffe **Carried**

4.2 2018 Financial Report

Motion: That the Murray Darling Association adopt the 2017-18 Annual Finance Reports.

Moved: P George/Cr B Featherston **Carried**

Minutes to be confirmed at 75th AGM

5. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

5.1 Region 1 Albury City Council

Objective:

To mitigate adverse economic impact on visitation dependent regional economies across the Murray Darling Basin caused by low water levels during peak visitation periods.

Key Arguments:

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority operates the Murray River system on behalf of Basin Governments. The Basin consists of 23 major river systems and is the home to more than 2 million people.

The Murray River is integral to the Basin, spanning three states and being the primary water supply for the majority of the Basin communities. The river is 2520 kilometres in length and includes four major storages, 16 storage weirs and 15 locks which assist in providing water for urban, recreational, industrial, agricultural, and environmental purposes.

Storage levels and subsequent releases are directly related to demand. Under current legislation the Manager of River Operations manages these storage levels and flows based on water consumption demands such as agricultural, urban populations and environmental initiatives. However, it is important that tourism be included the water demand equation. While tourism is not a consumptive water process, storage levels and river flows influence the social and economic livelihood of the basin communities.

Tourism in the Murray Region included more than 5.3 million domestic and international visitors during 2017. These visitors stayed 8.7 million nights and contributed a total of \$1.4 billion to the local economy. What is paramount to this level of tourism is the availability of suitable storage and water levels to ensure water-based activities can be enjoyed.

A decrease in demand for agricultural and environmental flows often coincides with Easter which is a high tourism period along the Murray River. In the past, river levels have significantly decreased in the week leading up to Easter, reducing the appeal and economic benefit to the region that relies heavily on water-based activities. Similarly changes in water consumption demand has resulted in significant river flow reduction in the lead up to Australia Day and typical an extended weekend and stay in our region.

We urge the River Operations Manager to consider tourism as a water demand player when adjusting storage and river flow. This is in line with a healthy, working Murray Darling Basin and the aim of the Basin Plan to ensure that water is shared between all users in a sustainable manner.

Moved: Cr D Thurley/A Lawson

That the Manager of River Operations, Murray-Darling Basin Authority, take into account how river levels impact on Basin communities during peak tourism periods. Furthermore, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority regulate river flows to the greatest extent possible so that there is adequate flow to support tourist activities along the Murray River, especially during periods of high tourism activity, including Christmas, school holidays, Australia Day, and Easter. in consultation with effected councils, the MDA, and the environmental water holders to ensure positive social, economic and environmental outcomes are achieved.

Carried

5.2 Region 1 Indigo Shire

Objective:

To provide for the issuing of a licence or licences to extract water for commercial purposes, and the impact on agricultural activity, aquifer management, and community concern, to be better reflected in the legislation, particularly in the Victorian *Water Act 1989*.

Key Arguments:

Indigo Shire Council and the community are united in the view that the matter of water extraction, particularly in high class agricultural areas, should face greater scrutiny and articulation within the legislation which governs the activity ie the Victorian Water Act, and the Victorian Planning and Environment Act, and associated Planning Scheme provisions.

Council also contends that the practice of converting part of existing water licences to commercial use will potentially proliferate across the state, and that the MDA, as a lead agency for local government, should undertake a strong advocacy program to represent the concerns and issues of local councils like Indigo.

Council also takes the view that the Water Act in Victoria is a product of a previous time when the management and use of water did not have the influential factors affecting it.

The issues of climate change, longer dry periods, community demands for local and sustainable food production, protection of high quality agricultural land, and greater community awareness of natural resource preservation, all bring the need for a review and potential change to the provisions of the Water Act, and the subsequent relationship with the Planning and Environment Act and local Planning Scheme provisions.

The extraction of water for commercial use is a matter which is causing significant concern within the community and within Council. Council is determined to support change to the legislation which governs such activities, and the submission of a motion to the MDA National Conference and AGM is one part of Council's approach.

Moved: Cr J O'Connor/G José

[That] The Murray Darling Association advocate to the Minister for Water in the Victorian Parliament that an amendment be made to the Water Act 1989 in Section 51. That the Minister in considering an application for a Commercial Water Licence to take and use ground water (as per section 51) be required to take into account

- i) community consultation and concerns,*
- ii) the effect of the application in regard to horticulture and agriculture,*
- iii) the effect on other bores for domestic and stock purposes,*
- iv) the effect on water use in nearby towns and villages,*
- v) the effect on the environment, the effect on in flows to reservoirs required for domestic uses,*
- vi) consultation with the local authority / Council or Shire and*
- vii) the purposes for which the water is being extracted.*

Carried

5.3 Region 2 Berrigan Shire

Objective:

To ensure that the National Carp Control Plan continues to be adequately supported and resourced to investigate the merits of a range of strategies to reduce the numbers of this aquatic pest in our waterways.

Further, to ensure that local government has the means and opportunities to inform the development of the plan and to, without initial costs to be borne by local communities, be able respond to any required managed clean-up process.

Key Arguments:

- Councils across Australia will be directly impacted by strategies to control carp, particularly with the release of a biological control.
- The impact of eradicating carp will be directly and immediately felt at local level and may pose a significant risk to water quality, human health and regional amenities
- Councils have established Emergency Management Plans and the staff and expertise to implement these.
- It is essential that the National Carp Control Plan provides adequate coordination and information to local government at a structural level to ensuring a coordinated emergency management response, if required.

Moved: Cr P Mansfield/P Frost

That the Murray Darling Association:

- a) Continues to support the National Carp Control Plan to undertake robust analysis of the impacts of the release of biological control on carp in Australia's waterways; and*
- b) Calls on the National Carp Control Plan to engage strongly with local government to ensure that local government Emergency Management Plans are adequately informed to respond to any managed or unmanaged release of the virus.*

Carried

5.4 Region 3

Objective:

To ensure that any future projects or strategies to address the natural constraint that is the Barmah Choke incorporates sufficient planning and regulatory oversight, informed by local government to balance the needs of our environmental assets; the health and wellbeing of our towns and communities; the supply demands arising out of existing, new and emerging industries including the proliferation of permanent plantings downstream of the Choke; and the stated objectives in delivering the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

Key Arguments:

- The Barmah Choke is a narrow section of the River Murray through the Barmah-Millewa Forest.
- The channel capacity of the Barmah Choke is about 8,500 ML per day downstream of Picnic Point.
- Winter and spring flooding, caused by the Choke, is critical to the health of the forest. River regulation has reduced the frequency and size of winter and spring floods and has increased the incidence of unseasonal flooding in summer and autumn, leading to a decline in the health of forest ecosystems.
- During summer and autumn, river operation aims to keep flows at or below channel capacity to minimise unseasonal flooding of the Barmah-Millewa Forest.
- This constraint provides challenges in meeting downstream peak water use demands and transferring water to Lake Victoria and South Australia, even in relatively dry years.
- The constraint has led to a restriction in water trade from areas upstream to downstream of the Barmah Choke.
- Communities and industry both above and below the choke have significant investment in environmental assets, agricultural productivity, water delivery infrastructure and community services.
- It is essential that detailed planning in collaboration with related councils and communities is undertaken to effectively balance competing priorities and objectives in any work undertaken in relation to future projects relating to the Barmah Choke.

Moved: Cr S Halls/Cr A Kassebaum

That the Murray Darling Association call on State and Federal governments and water management agencies to:

- a) Recognise the relationship between the capacity of the Barmah Choke and maintaining environmental assets; towns and communities; and the increasing demand for water for irrigation purposes arising from existing farming enterprise and the current proliferation of permanent plantings; and*
- b) Works with local government to establish an integrated approach to planning provisions that are consistent with achieving the social, environmental, cultural, and economic objectives of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.*

Carried

5.5 Murray Darling Association

Objective:

To establish an agreed definition for socio-economic neutrality in the context for the Water Act 2001 - Basin Plan 2012, and a fair, equitable and agreed framework for assessing it.

Key Arguments:

The *Water Act 2007* ('the Act') provides for the recovery of an additional 450 gigalitres (GL) of water ('upwater') within the Murray-Darling Basin by 2024, above and beyond the 2750 GL to be recovered by 2019 under the MDBP. Unlike the 2750 GL, impacts of recovery of this water must be *socioeconomically neutral*.

Section 7.17 of the Basin Plan provides the criteria for neutral or improved socio-economic outcomes of the improved efficiency contributions to be evidenced by willing participation of consumptive water users in projects that recover water through works that improve irrigation and on-farm water efficiency, or where Basin States assess that neutrality can be achieved through alternative arrangements. This is despite clear evidence that these measures can have significant adverse socio-economic impacts regionally.

This provision for socio-economic neutrality is inconsistent with accepted definitions of socioeconomic impacts, which state that these impacts are not only felt directly, but also indirectly through flow-on effects on other individuals and groups. The provision is also inconsistent with Commonwealth guidelines on socioeconomic impact assessment.

The MDA has partnered with the CSIRO and the University of Canberra to scope out a project that will enable local government and the communities we serve to inform the development of a fair and equitable definition socio-economic neutrality and an assessment framework that will leverage existing work by the EY, Aither, the MDBA and others. We are seeking your support to call on government to support this initiative, to build trust and confidence in the Basin Plan, and to establish a pathway for the 450GL that is consistent with intention of the legislation.

Moved: Cr D Thurley/Cr B Featherston

That the Murray Darling Association calls on the Commonwealth and all Basin state governments to commit to

- a) review the definition of socioeconomic neutrality in the context of the Murray-Darling Basin,*
- b) adopt a definition consistent with existing Commonwealth standards and guidelines, and*
- c) resource the development of an assessment framework that incorporates consistent local government participation.*

Carried

5.6 Region 6 Coorong District Council

Key Arguments:

The Climate Change Adaptation Plan for the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin identifies protection of the Lakes & Coorong region in response to rising sea levels as a priority area of future decision-making and makes a number of recommendations regarding possible adaptation responses. These recommendations include:

- commencing social engagement to increase community awareness and to promote informed debate about the future operation and location of the barrages;
- adaptation or modification of the barrages for faster operation to provide better ability to manage high-water levels on the estuary side of the barrages; and
- raising the height of, or relocating, the barrages, as a long-term solution.

Current projections from the CSIRO's Climate Change in Australia website indicates that sea levels in the Murray Basin region could rise above the 1986-2005 level by up to 0.64m by 2090 under a medium emissions scenario and by up to 0.84m by 2090 under a high emissions scenario. We also know that climate change is likely to result in lower average rainfall patterns and more frequent and extreme droughts. We understand CSIRO has predicted that median river flows in the southern Murray-Darling Basin will decline 13% by 2030.

Whilst the existing barrages do have some inbuilt adaptive capacity, it is generally accepted that under these long-term projected conditions the barrages would struggle to perform their function on a regular basis without adaptation.

A number of preliminary investigations on the implications of sea level rise and climate change for the CLLMM region have been undertaken (including one in 2005 for the then State Government Department of Environment and Heritage, another in 2009 by CSIRO for the SA Murray Darling Basin NRM Board, and another in 2011 for the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility) but as yet, no detailed modelling has been publicly released on the impacts of varying levels of sea level rise and river flows on the functioning of the Coorong and Lower Lakes system. Nor are we aware of any detailed quadruple-bottom line assessments (i.e. social, economic, cultural and environmental) of potential adaptation responses.

The barrages are "River Murray Operation Assets" and jointly controlled by the Australian, New South Wales, Victorian and South Australian governments. By agreement of the four asset controlling governments, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) manages the River Murray Operation Assets and under this structure, SA Water is appointed as the operating authority. It is thus beyond the scope of local government to have primary responsibility for undertaking climate change adaptation planning for the Coorong and Lower Lakes.

It took many decades for Basin states to agree on and then construct the current barrages and we can expect that developing and implementing an adaptation pathway for this critical infrastructure will play out over a similarly long timeframe. Given the long lead time required for decision-making of this kind, it is important that initial steps to gather the evidence base are taken sooner rather than later.

Moved: Cr J Barrie/Cr V Leng

That the Murray Darling Association calls on the South Australian and Federal Governments to undertake a detailed climate vulnerability assessment and adaptation plan for the Coorong and Lower Lakes, which should include but not necessarily be limited to:

- a) modelling the impacts of varying levels of sea level rise and river flows on the functioning of the Coorong and Lower Lakes system;*
- b) a review of existing literature and commissioning of further modelling and research to evaluate the likely social, economic, environmental, and cultural impacts of possible adaptation responses; and*
- c) delivery of a supporting community education and engagement strategy to facilitate informed community discussion about a preferred climate change adaptation pathway for the Coorong and Lower Lakes system.*

Carried

Minutes to be confirmed at 75th AGM

5.7 Board – Murray Darling Association

Objective:

To ensure that the MDA's regional boundaries and groupings reflect current and emerging alignments of local government across the Murray Darling Basin to optimise the association's productivity, efficiency, and efficacy.

Key Arguments:

The Constitution, at Part 5, section 15 (2) provides that

the Regions of the MDA shall be made up of those local government municipal areas determined and as amended from time to time by resolution of the board.

Current council groupings for the regions of the MDA (regional boundaries) are a matter of historical reference. It is assumed that the regions were originally created to align councils with common local and regional interests, or evolved as the organisation redefined its footprint in the 1980s.

In many instances existing local government networks serve to enhance regional economic, environmental, and issues-based alignments, including ROCs, Jos, LGAs and GCs.

The MDA must ensure that regional boundaries reflect current and emerging alignments of local government across the Murray Darling Basin to optimise the efficiency and value of participation in order to provide maximum benefit to member councils, and our stakeholders, and enhance collaboration with existing regional local government associations.

A strategic advisory committee will be established by the board of the MDA, tasked to undertake a detailed review of existing boundaries, and make recommendations for change taking into consideration the feedback from consultation with region committees, member councils and partner organisation before making recommendation to the board.

Moved: Cr D Thurley/G José

That the Murray Darling Association note the intention of the Board to undertake a review of MDA regional boundaries consistent with Part 5, section 15 (2) of the MDA Constitution.

Carried

5.8 Region 6 Rural City of Murray Bridge

Objective:

To ensure that investigations are undertaken to analyse the costs/benefits of River Murray weir upgrades for the purpose of improving salinity management.

Key Arguments:

The River Murray weirs and barrages, build between 1922 and 1940, were primarily designed to provide navigable weir pool height for vessels and also to provide reliable water supplies for consumptive use given the high variability of River Murray flows.

The majority of weirs (as well as the Lower Lakes barrages) are of a “stop-log” design which spill surface water from the high side of the weir.

This infrastructure design is unable to adequately meet the needs of clearing the denser saline water from the halocline or to scour debris from the bottom of the river, instead spilling fresh water over the top of the logs.

The MDBA liaises with state construction authorities with respect to maintenance and renewal of the weirs. Whilst significant infrastructure improvements have been made to a number of River Murray weirs in recent years, we query whether a systematic review of the costs/benefits of weir upgrades for the purpose of improving salinity management has been undertaken.

Region 6 is also interested in any analysis of how the weirs might operate to help or hinder the clean-up of carp biomass should the National Carp Control Plan proceed with release of the proposed virus at some point in the future.

Moved: Cr V Leng/Cr C Schubert

That the Murray Darling Association call on the Basin States and Federal Governments to investigate the benefits of upgrading outdated River Murray weir infrastructure so as to enable improved scouring of the river bottom to reduce build-up of salinity, heavy metals and debris. Noting that salinities are highest in the Lower Murray, such investigations should commence with the oldest pool weir at Blanchetown.

Carried

Objective:

To have a comprehensive database of all water related information for the entire country, easy to use and capable of compiling reports regarding water movement and use across the nation, including foreign ownership information tracking and reporting, in the interests of security of future water supply for communities and industry and being able to plan for future events such as extended dry periods. Downstream impacts of illegal take and government policy need to be addressed. A better understanding of water availability and demand across Australia as our population continues to grow and more rapid identification of illegal take or impacts on long term sustainable future can inform planning and policy.

Key Arguments:

While previous versions and elements of Water Registry have come and gone, the technology now exists which enables live data tracking and GPS monitoring of water flow and movement across land. There also is greater capability to combine multiple state databases into a one stop shop, which is easy to use and can adhere to standards, privacy and ensure secure data.

Perhaps the biggest single issue facing water management in this country is lack of transparency and public perception of mismanagement. Sourcing multiple websites from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, Commonwealth Environmental Water Office, Bureau of Meteorology, various state water authorities and agencies and Regulatory offices can be a tiresome exercise.

Indeed, various macro data is available across NSW which is patently incorrect or the “missing” data referred to in NSW Land and Water Commissioner dataset.

Ken Matthews’ report called for verifiable accurate data, the recently signed Compliance Compact highlights metering and a raft of goals and targets, prioritising risk areas, which suggests there is an appetite across the board for access to trustworthy data.

For companies wishing to maximise their investments, the best way to determine whether the price they want to pay for land and water meets their needs is to have access to all the variables and some historical data to inform possible investment or growth. Indeed, how much water is available is perhaps the biggest determination of investment decisions at the present time.

As well as a commercial function, foreign investors and the Australian public and regulators need to ensure that investment is in line with current legislation pertaining to percentage of foreign ownership. By providing accurate, current information and transparency, there can be greater certainty in the international and domestic market and in the wider public arena, that investment is supportive of Australian industry as a priority

Moved: Cr J MacAllister/Cr J Modica

That the Murray Darling Association lobby the Federal and Shadow Minister to instigate a National Water Registry, to monitor and report on all rainfall, surface and groundwater storage, evaporation and capacity or movement, including flow rate and interstate or intervalley trade, extraction, unaccounted activity, licenses and allocation in real time, and inform the public in relation to foreign ownership of water assets and infrastructure.

Carried

Objective:

Sustainable water resource management, water security, and water quality is a key issue for communities across Australia, particularly in a changing climate.

Key Arguments:

Under the Constitution of Australia, water is an area for the states to legislate, unless they confer their power to the Commonwealth, as occurred to establish the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA). Since its inception, we have seen the level of agreement between the states which is required to effect change and the occasional threat of some states to revoke their conferred power – to leave the MDBA Agreement.

Climate change adaptation is a challenge faced by local government across Australia. Key to long term sustainable future for communities across Australia is strong policy in water resource management to ensure equitable and transparent allocation and use of our limited water resources.

Recent media investigations have demonstrated that there are potential issues in regard to water management across states and the creation of a National Water Ombudsman would assist in reestablishing confidence among communities and local government, that the Federal Government is committed to ensuring the long-term future of communities throughout regional Australia through transparent and open processes.

By providing oversight through the judiciary, including provisions around preventing the concealment of information (eg NSW Ombudsman reports) and ensuring such office is compelled to publish findings, the public can be assured that legislation is uniform across state borders and adheres to extant laws at all levels around water sharing, trade and use, as the perception of vested interests, which can permeate the political system and erode confidence, will be finally eliminated from the equation.

While states will retain the legislative function in relation to water, proposed legislation will have the benefit of legal opinion at the highest level, with national oversight and vision to provide big picture response and risk management across state borders. The MDBA has been conferred towards a specific purpose – being the Murray Darling Basin and roll out of the Water Act 2007 - Basin Plan 2012 (the Plan), but an Ombudsman with Federal jurisdiction will be able to arbitrate and adjudicate on any water dispute across the country.

By giving this Ombudsman the power to impose punitive measures, enforcement and punishment can be standardised and will better reflect water and its misuse as a national value and matter for redress, in line with and informed by the various legislation and case law history in this country.

Moved: Cr J MacAllister/Cr J Modica

That the Murray Darling Association calls on the Federal Government to create a National Water Ombudsman with Federal jurisdiction to inquire, arbitrate, enforce, impose punitive measures and oversee amendments to state water legislation.

Carried

Objective:

As the level of government closest to community, local government plays an important role in representing local interests in Basin-related decisions that impact our communities. Whilst the views of local government and communities throughout the Basin about the various strengths and weaknesses of the Basin Plan may differ, the sector nonetheless agrees on the need for a national approach and on the need for formal recognition of the important role that local government plays in Basin Plan decision making.

Key Arguments:

Within the Murray-Darling Basin, agriculture and tourism are the backbones of our regional economies. The Basin produces \$22 billion worth of food and fibre every year and \$8 billion tourism dollars are spent in the Basin annually. On this basis, water for industry and water for the environment are both critically important for regional prosperity throughout the Basin.

Correspondingly, one of the goals of water resource management within the Basin must be to ensure (as far as possible) that both water quality and water levels are fit-for-purpose, whether that be for critical human water needs, for irrigation, for ecological health or for access and recreation.

Australia has grappled with the complex issue of Basin water-sharing for over 100 years and the need for a long-term and sustainable water management system involving all Basin States is clear. Successful water management in the Basin can only be achieved through genuine commitment and cooperation amongst Basin States.

Whilst implementation of the Basin Plan is proving difficult the overall objectives are sound. This motion expresses support for continued implementation of the Basin Plan on the basis that it represents a historic opportunity to achieve a healthy, working Basin for the long-term benefit of the Australian community. Backing away from the Plan would create great policy and investment uncertainty for regional Australia.

As recognised by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA), the success and progress of the Basin Plan depends on the support and understanding of local Basin communities. The Basin Plan is essential but complex and its implementation impacts different communities in different ways. Local government has an important role to play here, assisting state and federal governments to engage more fully with local and regional industry and interest groups.

Local government has the local knowledge required to understand, balance, plan for, and serve the various and often competing needs and interests that exist within and across our local communities.

Our established relationships and communication channels with community provide a reliable and effect vehicle for local information sharing, engagement, and collaboration. Having a local government representative meaningfully included in the formal decision-making processes underpinning Basin Plan implementation (such as Ministerial Council, the Basin Officials Committee and Basin Community Committee) would enhance the sectors ability to adequately support our communities through the implementation process.

Moved: Cr B Featherston/Cr C Schubert

That the Murray Darling Association:

- a) *Notes the importance of fit-for-purpose water availability for regional prosperity;*
- b) *Calls on all levels of government to recommit to full and timely implementation of the Basin Plan; and*
- c) *Calls for a formal role for local government in Murray-Darling Basin Plan decision making via an advisory seat at the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council.*

Carried

Minutes to be confirmed at 75th AGM

Key Arguments:

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) covers multiple states including Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia.

The Murray-Darling Basin is one of the world's largest and most productive river basins, accounting for \$19 billion of agricultural output and providing one third of Australia's food supply. It harbours some of our most important natural assets, supporting a diverse array of animals, plants and ecosystems of national and international significance.

The system of rivers, lakes and wetlands that run through our nation (the Murray Darling Basin) is complex, diverse and dynamic. There is nothing simple about it. For those managing water it's a challenge they navigate through every day.

Currently the MDBA operates across Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia. The aim of the Basin Plan is to ensure that water is shared between all users, including the environment, in a sustainable way. However, these arrangements are administered by member States and there is a lack of consistency across those States in terms of each State's arrangements and enforcement.

In July 2017 the ABC *Four Corners* program "Pumped" revealed astounding malpractice and alleged corruption, which is currently being investigated by the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC). Some of these allegedly corrupt transactions hide behind an alleged veil of incompetence of some states. Hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars have been spent on water "buybacks", where the government has paid twice the going rate for water which effectively does not exist, except during heavy rainfall and peak water conditions.

Four Corners also highlighted the problems with pumping and metering arrangements in NSW and the issues of alleged water theft and pumping at times of low river flow.

There are also issues in Queensland and a lack of agreement between Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales about water allocation and efficiencies.

In this context it would be advantageous for the MDBA to exercise the authority for compliance and enforcement of agreed outcomes for the basin regarding water retention and extraction limits to guarantee that agreed flows can pass downstream for the length of the river system.

Moved: Cr J MacAllister/G José

That the Murray Darling Association calls upon the Federal Government to strengthen the role of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority with regard to enforcement of compliance regarding water retention and extraction limits to guarantee that agreed flows are allowed to pass downstream for the length of the Barwon/Darling River.

Carried

Objective:

The National Water Infrastructure Development Fund (NWIDF) is an Australian Government Initiative. While the state and Territory governments are responsible for the management of water and water infrastructure, the NWIDF is a National fund that seeks to facilitate long-term economic and regional development. Many, if not all, regional industries are dependent on the secure delivery of adequate water. For industries such as agriculture the key limiting factor for future industry development is the availability of secure water supply.

Regional local governments throughout Australia will have a strong and enduring interest in water infrastructure planning and decision making. These local governments will be looking to fund both detailed planning and feasibility of water infrastructure projects as well as the timely development of that infrastructure. In order to have a 'pipeline' of water projects, the fund needs to retain sufficient dollars for both infrastructure feasibility and delivery. This fund needs to be replenished to ensure an ongoing stream of planned projects rather than a stop-start approach to infrastructure planning.

Given the substantial costs of both the infrastructure and the business cases are prohibitive to many local governments, it is essential that the National Government replenish funds to enable this important work.

Key Arguments:

The National Water Infrastructure Development Fund (NWIDF) implements the Australian Government's commitment to start the detailed planning necessary to build or augment existing water infrastructure, including dams, pipelines, or managed aquifer recharge. This fund is intended to help secure the nation's water supplies and deliver regional economic development benefits for Australia, while also protecting our environment.

The fund has two parts. There was a feasibility component to accelerate the completion of business cases and to confirm sufficient demand exists for the infrastructure. There is also a capital component to the fund to provide funding for the construction of this key infrastructure.

It is understood the NWIDF currently retains funds that can be utilised for capital works. However, applications for the feasibility component of the NWIDF have closed. It is understood that the feasibility component of the fund has been fully expended.

Is it considered that a sustained approach to water infrastructure planning and development is required for a 'pipeline' of future water projects. A stop-start approach to funding, and therefore planning, is not an optimal approach. A pipeline of priority projects can be a more measured approach working from strategic business cases to detailed business cases and ultimately to delivery of the capital works.

This will provide the nation with steady stream of prioritised projects. An ongoing funding commitment is necessary. This will enable the assessment of the best sites for new water infrastructure and to accelerate the completion of thorough business cases. It will also provide the best balance of funding to both assess the feasibility of projects and to deliver this critical water infrastructure.

The Productivity Commission's draft report on National Water Reform highlights the need for quality water infrastructure feasibility studies to ensure environmental sustainability and financial viability before government resources are committed for construction. This approach demands funding for business cases for water infrastructure projects. These projects are catalysts for

regional and economic development. Clearly, a sustainable and consistent supply of water through enhanced water infrastructure is critical to agriculture, industry, the environment and the community.

Moved: Cr R Marsh/A Johns

That the Murray Darling Association call on the Australian Government to replenish the National Water Infrastructure Development Fund to ensure sufficient funds are available to both assess the feasibility of projects and to deliver this critical water infrastructure.

Carried

Minutes to be confirmed at 75th AGM

5.14 Don Obrein Life Member and past president (1982-1986)

Objective:

With the use of renewable resources becoming a key topic, utilising flows through weirs throughout the Murray-Darling Basin – similar to the technology utilised by the Snowy Mountains Scheme to generate electricity – will benefit communities and economic growth.

Key Arguments:

- Energy is becoming a major issue – specifically the use of renewables.
- The cheapest way to generate electricity is to utilise the water flow that passes through weirs located within the Murray-Darling Basin.
- Torrumbarry Weir, located between Echuca/Moama and Koondrook/Barham, has between 10 and 12 outlets that can be utilised to generate electricity.
- The flows through these outlets have the capacity to generate electricity 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Water flowing down the Murray River can have a dual use. It can be used for food production and to generate electricity for urban and rural communities.
- Water that passes through Torrumbarry Weir has already been through the hydroelectricity process thanks to the Snowy Mountains Scheme located upstream. There would be no issue utilising the same water for a similar purpose.
- If successful, similar technology can be installed at Hume Weir and Yarrawonga Weir to generate electricity.

Moved: Cr A Kassebaum /Cr A Tilley

That the Murray Darling Association calls on the Murray-Darling Basin Authority to investigate and report on the feasibility of utilising all weirs within the Murray-Darling Basin for power generation.

Carried

5.15 Board – Murray Darling Association

Objective:

To correct an error of omission in the final draft of the MDA Constitution 2016.

Note: A special motion must pass by a vote of 75% of delegates to carry.

Moved: Cr D Thurley/Cr P Mansfield

That the constitution be amended as follows:

Part 11, item 38 – add the following subclauses

- a. The amendment must be lodged with the executive 12 weeks prior to the MDA Meeting, and*
- b. The amendment must be listed as a motion and published in the agenda for the MDA Meeting.*

Carried (unanimously)

Minutes to be confirmed at 75th AGM

Objective:

To ensure supply for stock and domestic use downstream of Menindee lakes, by adjusting the top level at which MDBA controls operations of the Menindee Lakes storage.

Key Arguments:

Current rules state that when storage levels in all the Menindee Lakes drop below a total of 480GL (under MDBA operation), then operation reverts to WaterNSW control and that when storage levels reach 640GL across the Menindee Lakes, then control again passes to MDBA operations.

The geology on which Menindee Lakes sits and the engineering efficiencies which regulate the flow of water through the lakes leave Lake Cawndilla (as the last in the string of pearls) with nowhere to go, despite calls for the water to be diverted back into the Darling river and all the lakes have a very silty layer which sits beneath the regulators, so that this silty, "dead" water is "stuck" in the lake, unable to be used, yet is (along with the trapped water in Lake Cawndilla) included in storage calculations, despite being inaccessible.

As the 70 families living below the Menindee Lakes once again brace for the third cease to flow event in five years, having seen 6000ml of water released per day during the summer months, as required under the Murray Darling Basin Plan (the Plan), residual storage in the Menindee Lakes is insufficient to meet stock and domestic needs, let alone the two years' assurance for Broken Hill supply.

The rapid draw down of water out of the Menindee Lakes has once again left an already depleted system, into which annually decreased inflows are approaching zero inflows, at a time of arguably the worst drought in living history, and is contributing to depressed industry, economy, death of stock and native wildlife on a distressing scale and has resulted in many native riverine species being upgraded on endangered lists, as well as the tragic increase of suicides among tight-knit communities.

That evaporation figures and storage level calculations are disputed, further muddies the scientific rigour with which verifiable, accurate and trustworthy data can inform operations and provide the community with any certainty to plan stock levels and plantings into the future.

That the same mistakes are being made, leading to the same results is infuriating and greatly frustrates the community, some of whom have been farming the land of their ancestors for six generations, others who have 65,000 years of knowledge of connection and caretaking the area.

That the 480 / 640 trigger is embedded in the Plan means it is unlikely to be easily removed, but there is now five years' worth of evidence suggesting that a change needs to be made, and quickly.

Moved: Cr J MacAllister/Cr J Modica

That the Murray Darling Association calls on the NSW and Federal Governments to:

- a) *Renegotiate the management of water in the Menindee Lakes, so that the trigger point for the Murray-Darling Basin Authority to control water is increased from 640GL to 800GL, (as per recommendation 16 of the Augmentation of Water Supply in rural and regional NSW report dated May 2018); and*
- b) *that the 800GL referred to in a) above does not include "dead" or inaccessible water, including water held in Lake Cawndilla.*

Lost

There was broad support for the concept, however recognising that the New South Wales Government has a number of measures in place, time is needed for these initiatives to be completed.

Minutes to be confirmed at 75th AGM

Objective:

To promote the use and management of Basin water resources in a way that optimises economic, social and environmental outcomes, recognising the importance of local knowledge to develop lasting solutions.

Key Arguments:

One of the most significant and fundamental risks to the effective implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan is the omission of local government from any formal role in the institutional and governance arrangements of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

In the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the MDA and the MDBA, the MDBA commits to involve the MDA in the gathering and collection of data as it relates to the MDBA's monitoring and evaluation framework and reporting requirements dealing with social and economic impacts. The MDBA will consider resource implications of such work and will assist where appropriate.

Collaboration to support and stimulate locally driven regional economic development initiatives, and assist communities to identify and pursue opportunities for structural adjustments in response to changing water allocations requires active commitment by the MDBA to work consistently and equitably with impacted communities through their local government.

The economic benefits can be categorised in two distinct parts:

- a) mitigation of adverse economic impacts by understanding the underlying drivers to enable targeted response strategies; and
- b) enabling communities to identify and peruse regional economic development opportunities.

Moved: Cr J O'Connor/Cr J Modica

The Murray Darling Association calls on the Murray Darling Basin Authority to

- a) *recognise that the greatest challenge for councils impacted by changing water availability due to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, and acknowledging other cumulative influences, is how to manage structural adjustment within the respective councils, and*
- b) *engage formally and consistently with local councils to support community-based solutions for structural adjustment.*

Carried

5.18 Region 2 City of Greater Shepparton

Objective:

To mitigate the serious impacts of erosion of the banks of the Goulburn River caused by summer transfer of commercial water.

Key Arguments:

During spring, environmental flows were delivered to the Goulburn River to promote favourable conditions for plant growth to protect the banks of the Goulburn River. These flows also produced habitat for invertebrates and crustaceans, which support a healthy ecosystem in the river for the benefits of fish and other water-based inhabitants. The results of these environmental flows produced a healthy and protective cover of vegetation for the river banks.

In February 2018 the Goulburn River rose approximately 1.5 meters above its normal summer level and that is where it stayed for around 2 months destroying all the ground cover which the environmental flows had produced earlier in the year. The river was artificially held high in these summer months due to the transfer of water to other irrigation areas following purchasing of this water.

The end result is a river in far worse condition than before the environmental flows started, with mud slipping into the river from the bare banks and those bare banks exposed to wave erosion.

Inter valley water transfer was never to be done with any detriment to the river but clearly this is not the case. This has to be reversed immediately.

Moved: Cr D Patterson/Cr P Mansfield

That the Murray Darling Association: Call on Water Ministers, Water Authorities, Catchment Management Authorities and the Murray Darling Basin Authority to undertake a detailed and wholistic review of the environmental impacts of the practice of running commercial water down the Goulburn River during summer periods.

Carried

6. NEXT MEETING DATE

The 75th Annual General Meeting will be held in Toowoomba, QLD in 2019. Date and location are to be advised.

7. CLOSE