



# Murray Darling Association Inc.

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## Minutes of Ordinary Meeting -Region 9 held on Thursday 16 March 2017 commencing at 10.15am at Leeton Shire Council Chambers, Leeton

### 1. ATTENDANCE

- 1.1 Present:
- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Cr Paul Maytom       | Mayor, Leeton Shire Council             |
| Mrs Jackie Kruger    | GM, Leeton Shire Council                |
| Cr Greg Verdon       | Chairman, Riverina Water County Council |
| Mr Bede Spannagle    | Riverina Water County Council           |
| Cr. Dino Zappacosta  | Griffith City Council                   |
| Mr Peter Veneris     | GM, Lockhart Shire Council              |
| Cr Rodger Schirmer   | Mayor, Lockhart Shire Council           |
| Cr Paul Funnell      | Wagga City Council                      |
| Mr. Mark Gooden      | Private Member                          |
| Mr. Bede Meecham     | Life Member                             |
| Mr. Russell Campbell | Carrathool Shire Council                |
| Mrs. Ruth McRae      | LRC Chair, Murrumbidgee Council         |
| Mrs. Denise Lalor    | DPI Water                               |
| Mrs. Liz Stott       | Regional Engagement Officer, MDA        |
| Ms. Debbie Evans     | Exec Assistant, Leeton Shire Council    |
- 1.2 Apologies:
- |                       |                          |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Ms. Emma Bradbury     | CEO, MDA                 |
| Mr. Joe Burns         | Member, Leeton           |
| Snowy Valleys Council |                          |
| Mrs. Judy Charlton    | Narrandera Shire Council |
| Mr. Brett Stonestreet | Griffith City Council    |
| Cr John Dal Broi      | Griffith City Council    |
| Cr. Brett Lewis       | Carrathool Shire Council |
| Cr. David Fenson      | Carrathool Shire Council |

Moved that the apologies be accepted (R.Campbell/D. Zappacosta)

- 1.3 Conflicts of Interest – no conflicts were noted

### 2. WELCOME

Chair of Region 9 – Cr Paul Maytom (Mayor, Leeton Shire Council)

Cr. Maytom thanked everyone for travelling to take part in the meeting today.

Cr. Maytom respectfully acknowledged the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting today, the Wiradjuri people, and paid his respects to Elders both past and present.

### 3. MINUTES

- 3.1 Minutes of the previous meeting- held 23 November 2016 were recorded as true and correct.  
(G. Verdon/R. Schirmer)

**4. BUSINESS ARISING**

There was no business arising.

**5. Clarence River Tributaries Diversion Scheme –**

In view of the fact that Cr. Zappacosta had to leave the meeting early, Cr. Zappacosta spoke on the report prepared by David Coffey in September 1984 which proposed a scheme to divert tributaries of the Clarence River to the Murray-Darling. A summary of the report was distributed to the meeting (copy attached) and Cr. Zappacosta gave a brief outline of that report.

Moved D. Zappacosta/Paul Funnell that a motion be submitted to the MDA Annual Congress to agree to a further feasibility study to gather up-to-date information for investigation into the scheme. (Carried)

**6. REPORTS:**

**Chief Executives Report – Tabled.**

Emma is attending a Ministerial meeting today with Barnaby Joyce and that is why she is not able to be present. Minutes will be forwarded to members as soon as they are to hand.

Following the Board meeting in SA we need to establish a position to be sustainable into the future – focus on the critical areas to be worked on with less staff. There is more reliance on the Chairs.

**Chair's Report –** verbal report delivered.

Moved Paul Funnell/Greg Verdon – Carried

**7. STAKEHOLDERS PRESENTATIONS:**

***Murrumbidgee EWAG – presentation by Terry Korodaj, Community Engagement and Communications Manager (copy of presentation attached)***

Terry works with the environmental water program which is responsible for delivering and managing environmental water in NSW.

The purpose of EWAG is to provide advice to the Office of Environment and Heritage on managing environmental water with the key focus on maximizing ecological benefit whilst identifying risks and mitigating adverse impacts. The group is made up of people with a range of knowledge and experience to advise on delivery of both rules based and licensed water eg Govt agencies, fisheries, flood plain land managers eg Fivebough Tuckerbill wetlands, specialist scientific people , water management and ecology and practical skills and experience in river operations.

Rural based water is rules regarding water sharing plans and they may or may not deliver water every year. Licensed water is licenses held if we were irrigators eg access to water and constrained by the same allocation decisions that are made each year.

EWAG is not a forum for water policy, water recovery or claims for water allocation. The group doesn't have any power or authority over decision making – primarily focused on where environmental water is going to go and why and how to get there without creating adverse impacts.

Each of the advisory groups have clear roles, responsibilities and obligations for members. Water sharing planning is done with DPI water and when completed handed over to OEH to manage and that is where EWAG comes into the picture as advisory to OEH. The principal focus is on the annual watering plan. EWAG is responsible for establishing objectives and priorities and specific for water delivery in the coming year.

There are five EWAGs that operate in NSW – Gwydir, Macquarie, Lachlan, Murrumbidgee and Murray and Lower Darling.

The Murrumbidgee Environmental Water Allowance Reference Group is a specific advisory group for the valley that we are in and meet quarterly. Stakeholder's include community reps, recreation fishers, farming groups, Aboriginal organisations, floodplain graziers, environment representatives, scientists and partner agencies, primary industries, river operators. Had 20 people at the meeting in Balranald last week so is quite a large group. They advise on which sites to target for watering and best timing. They also advise on how to minimize disruption to farmers and communities.

There is discussion with farmers in Collingullie and the upper Murrumbidgee concerned about the flooding of land and making sure we don't upset neighboring land.

EWAG is constrained by the current set of operating rules. Terry is happy to come back to the next meeting to provide more information and will ask James Maguire to address the group.

EWAG are in the process of planning a connection flow in Autumn 2017 however there is going to be a high demand of water in April and not going ahead will avoid issues of channel sharing. Looking now to May for a delivery of these flows but now not possible because of work being done on one of the dams and so are now looking at June. Trying to work in with consumptive users and riparian landholders.

Paul Funnell – Put in place constraint of not more than 20,000 ml . Haven't seen any minutes from last week's EWAG meeting. One of the issues landholders have had for nine years is that we now have been invited along to the meeting however we don't get input and have no voting rights. Is it going to change? The current format of EWAG is that it isn't a decision making forum. Their focus is primarily delivering water available to assets and staying within the constraints that EWAG operate in at present.

Paul Funnell stated that other stakeholders should also address the MDA as well as James Maguire because it has constantly been a conflicting situation with EWAG. Where is the forced easements across private land up to? Terry to get back to us on that. DPI water has taken on the responsibility for the constraints project in both the Murray Valley and Murrumbidgee Valley which means that OEHL doesn't have any responsibility or obligation in that space.

Feasibility study produced by Paul Doyle from the MDBA on the state of higher flows. At the moment because of my legal action (Paul Funnell) I am restricting you to 20,000ml but EWAG is looking for 30,000 ml. The report from Paul Doyle is for a 45,000ml flow which would flood thousands of hectares. When we will get an answer?

Autumn watering – July last year received a letter from Vince Kelly to put water down. Allocation at time 60ml downstream . How much in dams is environmental water? EWAG to get back to Paul Funnell. Paul advised he is getting environmental damage created by the environmental flows. Ancient redgums, bank slumping, lipia - needs to be addressed. Terry to send through information on these issues.

EWAG communication with riparian landholders is not good. – a lot more work needs to be done.

Terry to present OEHL future plans at the next meeting of Region 9.

***Update from MDBA REO, Liz Stott – (copy of presentation slides attached)***

In January public meetings were held in Griffith and Leeton with MDBA senior staff, Chair and CEO. Liz been doing Stocktake report for the regions and developing local action plans.

The meetings were attended by around 100 stakeholders. There was mixed feedback on the sessions – some thought it was a good opportunity to have questions asked and answered but others had the idea it was as previous public meetings and came along for a showdown! The round table meeting

in the afternoon was well attended by over 40 stakeholders. That group was an invited group including a suite of people affected by the basin plan ie Local Govt reps, industries (cotton/rice/walnuts), MI Leeton and Coly/ NSW farmers as well as local Business Chambers from Griffith and Leeton.

Liz attended a REO workshop in Canberra and undertook a stocktake on who the stakeholders were in her region, the level of interest and understanding of the basin plan and water issues. Liz identified some of the key priorities the MDBA need to look at the next 12 months going forward and these will be fed into the Local Action Plan.

Key strategies and principles for MDBA are:

- Build trust
- Breakdown barriers
- Building connections and understanding
  - Get back to basics
  - Be present locally (more MDBA presence at meetings and events, local newsletters, media)
  - Regional differences in the basins so need to adjust approach. Need to develop local action plan.
  - MDBA team in Canberra need to support the REOs with questions raised by stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe.
  - Be proactive not reactive. MDBA are risk adverse but need to improve regional engagement.

The recommended priorities for our area are:

- Develop targeted communication material
- Build rapport with the community
- Provide background briefings for local media – lots of regions face issues with water as it is a complex issue and can be lost in translation. Help media do their job better – get understanding.
- Increase understanding of water issues – largely public are confused with who does what, increase water literacy around region
- Develop one-stop-shop for water information – somewhere stakeholders can go to get answers eg. Website – one page

Opportunities.

- Looking to capitalize on existing meetings/events (eg meeting today/Riverina Field Days) where people can come along and ask questions.
- Collaborate with others in the water space (eg. Irrigation Infrastructure Operators (MI and Coly Irrigation), Commonwealth Environmental Water Office and NSW DPI etc)
- Stories and news in local publications
- Presentations (eg Basin Plan 101) – Liz to speak with Rotary in the next fortnight.

MDBA Priorities for 2017

- SDL adjustment mechanism – currently hot topic. Will be worked on this year.
- Social and economic studies feeding into the interim evaluation. Phil Townsend, MDBA economist from Canberra visits the region regularly. Catches up with people from Councils, irrigation companies and is collecting data to feed into his further evaluation of impacts on the basin plan. Liz invited members to let her know if Councils would like to catch up with him.
- Outcome of the Northern Basin Review and other amendments. These were announced end Oct/early Nov last year and were open for public consultation. MDBA are reviewing submissions and will make recommendations to the Minister on what the amendments will be.

Ways to connect with the MDBA:

Contact Liz, Sign up to receive media releases, follow on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (details on last page of attached presentation).

Liz confirmed her area of responsibility is basically MIA and CIA. Russell Campbell asked who he could speak to about the Lachlan and Liz said she would be happy to speak with him. Signs on river crossings “where is this water going and is it irrigation water?” Liz advised this has been taken on board.

Paul Funnell – Issues with communication. Get different answers from different departments. Liz emphasized the importance of correct communication to the MDBA. Other regions have the same problem – buck passing.

Bede advised they have spent 12 months to get a soft cap of 15,000mg at Wagga to build a coffer dam. No communication from NSW Water or DPI. Spending \$35-\$40M on a treatment plant and cannot get an answer. (Update from Bede 20/4/17 – contact has now been made and communication has been fruitful).

Motion to be put together before the next meeting re: communication difficulties. Each member to put key concerns together and take through us and then to Emma Bradbury to take to appropriate agencies or authorities.

Liz raised issue with the MDBA and they are on board and they are going to work towards being more helpful in directing traffic if required.

***NSW DPI and Water – Presentation by Denise Lalor, Water Planner (South) – (presentation attached)***

Denise is Water Planner for DPI water looking after Murray Lower Darling surface water, groundwater, Lachlan groundwater and recently asked to look after Murrumbidgee groundwater as well. DPI water are in the middle of a restructure so staff are trying to cover all bases

Denise went through the roadmap outlining how DPI are going to implement Water Resource Plans (WRP's). Key principles are:

1. No adverse impacts to water access license holders
2. No net reduction in protection of planned environmental water (PEW)
3. Commonwealth responsible for bridging the gap between SDLs and current limits
4. WRP will meet requirements set out in the MDBP

NSW also requires:

1. Balance social, cultural, economic and environmental needs.
2. Are cost neutral for NSW license holders
3. Minimise change for WSPs within their 10 year life span. Murrumbidgee WSP has just been renewed.

Needs to be based on extensive consultation with stakeholders and the community. Stakeholder advisory panels will guide the development of the surface water WRPs

Phases in development:

- Preparation of the plan with input from community consultation
- 3 months - Status and Issues – public submissions on issues and options to address them. DPI will hold targeted consultation with key stakeholders on a valley by valley basis
- 6-15 months – Strategy and Rule Development – targeted consultation on assessment and revision of options
- 6 months – Draft Plan – public submissions on draft plan – targeted consultation
- 6 months – Final Plan – Targeted consultation on responses to matters raised in submission on draft
- 6 months - Accreditation by the MDBA
- Commencement by July 2019

Region 9 spans a few different resource plan areas – Lachlan Surface Water, Lachlan Alluvium, Murrumbidgee Surface water, Murrumbidgee Alluvium, Lachlan & South West Fractured Rock.

Denise advised Councils would have received fact sheets on the WRP process.

First stage is to look at Status and Issues document which encompasses three main sections:

1. WRP principles/structure/process
2. Status of the catchment (values)
3. Issues to be addressed.

WRPs must:

- Describe water rights
- SDL compliance and assessment
- 'Include a WQ management plan
- Provide for environmental watering
- Address risks to water resources – these are being drafted at the moment
- Human needs in extreme events -
- Take account for Aboriginal values and uses

Paul Funnell principles – put cap on aquifer. Allowing sleeper licenses to trade water. Progressive decline in water.

Discussion will take place as to what SDLs will be. Already lost 47%.

For the past five years have been requesting a risk assessment.

Weekly updates are on DPI website.

WRP status for Region 9:

- Lachlan Surface water status and issues closed in Jan 2017 and issues report being prepared.
- Lachlan Alluvium – on public exhibition and closes on 31 March
- Murrumbidgee Surface water – on public exhibition till 31 March
- Murrumbidgee Alluvium – due out in April 2017
- Lachlan & South West Fractured Rock – due out in August 2017

Status of the WRP includes:

- Plan area description and water included
- Beneficial users:
  - Aboriginal values and uses
  - Irrigation
  - TWS and human needs
  - Recreational users
- Key environmental assets in that area
- Water quality and quantity

Issues for the Basin Plan requirements, need to look at:

- Identifying opportunities for Aboriginal values and uses – fish species to the aboriginal communities, campsites or particular spots on the river important to them.
- Complying with the SDL
- Provide for environmental watering – updating rules
- Manage medium and high risks e.g. ecological values, interception, climate change
- Identify measures for water quality objectives
- Managing extreme events – drought (not flooding)

Status and Issues report will be broken down into the following categories:

- Supporting Aboriginal values and Uses
- Improving water sharing (WSP rules)
- Environmental watering
- Managing risks
- Improving water quality
- Managing extreme events

These issues are standard across the State.

Chairman thanked Denise.

Denise to send email with contact details.

The Chair commented that it was good to get agencies together to see how they interact.

8. **GENERAL BUSINESS:**

NSW Legislative Council – general purpose standing committee No. 5 – inquiry into the Augmentation of Water Supply for Rural and Regional NSW – can go to website and see transcripts. Report doesn't have to be delivered until August 2017

Annual Conference will be held in Renmark on 11, 12 & 13 October, 2017.

Next meeting date – 18<sup>th</sup> May 2017 subject to confirmation that Terry Korojay, OEH, is available. If not we will reschedule.

Meeting closed at 1.05pm

*The Murray Darling Association acknowledges and thanks  
Leeton Shire Council for their support in  
hosting this meeting of Region 9*