



## MINUTES

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**MURRAY DARLING ASSOCIATION (MDA) INC.  
REGION 9 ORDINARY MEETING  
HELD IN PERSON/VIA ZOOM THURSDAY, 19 MAY 2022 AT 10.30AM**

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### **PRESENT**

Chair Cr Glen Andreazza (Deputy Mayor), GM Brett Stonestreet, Griffith City Council; Cr Jenny Clarke, Narrandera Shire Council; Paul Maytom, CEO Mark Lamb, MDA (Via Zoom); Tim Phillips, Communications Officer, MDA Head Office (via Zoom); Bede Spannagle, Riverina Water (via Zoom); Cr Geoff Chapman, Hay Shire Council (via Zoom); Cr Gail Driscoll, Lockhart Shire Council (via Zoom); Cr Paul Smith, Leeton Shire Council (via Zoom) GM Jackie Kruger, Leeton Shire Council, Cr Ruth McRae, Murrumbidgee Council (via Zoom), Joe Burns, Cr Bev Furner, Carrathool Shire Council (via Zoom), Brittany Everett and Kim Burgess, Minute Secretaries

### **1 APOLOGIES**

Mayor Doug Curran (Griffith City Council), Shane Wilson, Narrandera Shire Council

### **2 INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME**

Chair welcomed all delegates and conducted an Acknowledgement of Country.

### **3 PRESENTATION OF PLAQUE TO FORMER CHAIR PAUL MAYTOM**

Current Chair Glen Andreazza presented Former Chair with a Plaque to acknowledge the long period that Paul was Chair of MDA Region 9.

Paul provided a recount of the importance and impact of the MDA regarding conversations and capacity building within the Basin area.

The MDA Region 9 group once again thank Paul for his tireless efforts, knowledge and involvement over many years.

### **4 DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Nil

## **5 MINUTES**

**RECOMMENDED** on the motion of Paul Maytom and GM Brett Stonestreet that the minutes of the previous meeting on 17 March 2022, having first been circulated amongst the members be confirmed.

### **6.1 CEO'S REPORT**

CEO Mark Lamb spoke of the initial contact he is making as CEO with Member and Non-Member Councils to build the strength of the Association and the representation value of the MDA across Councils, State Governments and Federal Government.

Mark mentioned one of the platforms from which the MDA is working is in the area of the Basin Community Leadership Program (BCLP), designed to expand and be relevant across the Basin area. A program that started but required further input with programs provided through Government Department of Agriculture and Water funding. Workshops were completed in the mouth of the Murray area by end of March 2022. Next plan is to engage with communities in Southern NSW regarding this program.

Mark indicated that he continues to engage with various Politicians on both sides of Politics at Federal and State levels. Mark indicated some confidence with building the relationships so far to further discuss water matters with a possible new Federal Government Minister already aware of the MDA and its programs.

Mark advised the funding mechanisms to the organisation are important and in that way building valuable relationships, including partnerships with Universities, such as Cooperative Research Centre at Melbourne University and UNE who will look at drought reliance and both who will provide the valuable knowledge and also possible funding opportunities to build onto MDA work and programs.

Another area that Mark has engaged in is partnering with the CSIRO with Mark's contact previously in the past an invaluable factor towards a collaborative approach. The CSIRO have engaged the MDA for a project regarding the Circular Economy which it is hoped will lead to recurrent funding opportunities for the MDA. The project is all about repurposing waste materials. This project will broaden the relevance of the MDA which expands the MDA participation not only in water but another program, such as the Circular Economy, viewing Councils as key to implementing the Circular Economy. A report from Mark on this program will be finalised and be available from the end of June 2022.

Mark mentioned that the other programs/projects that CSIRO and MDA can be involved in will be around plastics and water quality.

Mark reminded the group of the upcoming Conference in Albury in September. Some seed funding from Tourism NSW has been possible which will assist with organisation, etc. The Conference will include a tour of Dartmouth Dam and two key days of information sharing, including the MDBA and the Inspector-General of Water Compliance. This will be a focus on face to face meeting rather the virtual Conferences of the past couple of years.

Brett Stonestreet raised question as to whether the alternate Government has given any indications of their position regarding 450GI upwater component (not as yet activated as part of the MDB Plan) and the moratorium on water buybacks – critical for the economies and communities in the region. Mark indicated that there is some optimism but significant challenges to the plan and the outcomes to be achieved. Mark indicated that the Shadow Minister Teri Butler is conscious of the issues and the concerns across the Regions and he continues to talk with state and federal authorities.

## **6.2 MDA BOARD MEETINGS**

MDA Board Meetings 2022 are noted.

## **7 PRESENTATION**

Attending via visual link for the presentation were:

Brian Graham, Manager Water Allocations, Water Division, DPE;  
Priyantha Jayakody, Senior Hydrologist, Policy, Planning and Sciences Division, DPE;  
Stefanie Schulte, Manager Regional Water Strategies, DPE

Brian introduced Priyantha and Stefanie.

Priyantha provided a presentation on water allocations – copy of the presentation will be distributed to the Region 9 members following the meeting.

Q&A session followed including points raised by Members and response by Brian Graham, DPE:

- Conservative approach by NSW Government regarding Water Allocations regardless of the wetter than normal climatic conditions of the past year – Government not taking risk but rather Agricultural business are the front of the risk taking.
- Inconsistencies intertwined with dry seasons.
- Climate change modelling.
- Statutory Water Sharing Plans stipulates water allocations based on risk set based on previous conditions pre-2004/millennium drought.
- Exposure to risk during dry periods a concern by Department.
- Balance between productive water and dry periods that are inevitable which modelling shows those periods are worsening.
- Should water be moved out of productive water and available for conservative needed dry periods.
- Draft Regional Water Strategy and submissions are invited for policy implementations taking account the needs for water, forecasts and future predictions.
- Storage in the local area for savings of water, to address needs for the future and therefore importance of a project such as Lake Coolah.
- Unused water/risk and Irrigator use.
- Priorities by Department when water conservation and water use.

## **8 ITEMS**

### **8.1 YANCO CREEK**

Paul Maytom raised the item regarding the Yanco Creek modernisation project. Paul indicated that in meetings up to two years ago there were options at the time for the modernisation project to go forward. There has been indicators to suggest that four projects have been funded within the system however the information around the Yanco Creek modernisation is not clear.

Mayor Ruth McRae added her concerns and frustration around this project and the Yanco Offtake is understood to be unfunded. Added to this is the correct level of information has not been provided. Whether these projects can be finalised by 2024 is in doubt as otherwise the default position could well be buybacks.

Jackie Kruger added that it may be best to ask that those that can provide input into this matter separately do so to allow for the content of information to be determined by the Region9 members.

Ruth McRae suggested contacts to provide such information. These being:

Tanya Thompson, Yanco Stakeholder Advisory Group  
David Clarke, Yanco Technical Advisory Group, DPIE  
Matt Kendall – Project Principal Murrumbidgee SDLAM Programs

Agreed upon by the Region 9 Members that a request be forwarded to the relevant Department representative (Matt Kendall) and Advisory Groups that a brief be provided of the four current projects that are understood to be funded and are targeted to go ahead and overall advice on where the Yanco offtake modernisation project is at.

The members agreed to Chair Andreazza's suggestion that a motion be provided to the MDA Conference which parallels the above. Such a motion will be forwarded via the MDA Head Office.

## **8.2 DAM PLANS**

Paul Maytom said that we need to reiterate the position of MDA Region 9 on Lake Coolah particularly in light of recent Daily Advertiser article identifying the water catchment as a prospective strategy.

Paul noted the upcoming submissions closing date for the draft Murrumbidgee Regional Water Strategy on 22 May 2022. Paul reminded the Group that the Lake Coolah project was endorsed through a motion for a feasibility study and then was taken to the MDA Conference last year where it gained support. The motion was also endorsed by RAMJO.

Paul highlighted that the points have all been raised before and that the information exists around a feasibility study. However it is about taking it to the next level.

Chair asked CEO Mark Lamb whether the potential could be for a meeting with the NSW Minister for Water to discuss a way forward for this matter.

Chair mentioned email from David Farley regarding LakeCoolah Feasibility study and suggested that CEO Mark Lamb discuss with David the latest efforts he is making on this matter to avoid any doubling up.

Jackie Kruger clarified the submissions due on Friday to the Regional Water Strategy and support for the Lake Coolah feasibility/strategy should be included.

Jackie highlighted the importance of ensuring any submissions need to advocate for both Lake Coolah but also concerns around the conservative modelling that has been a part of the NSW Government methods of addressing water allocations.

Jackie also indicated that she will lead the process towards a submission to the Water Strategy by MDA Region 9 by 22 May 2022.

## **8.3 Utility Magazine**

Details provided as a link in the Agenda noted by the group.

## **9 GENERAL BUSINESS**

Nil.

## **10 NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is to be held 28 May 2022 at 10am. That meeting will be open to all Members to attend in-person if they wish to do so. Otherwise a Zoom link will be made available to those that would prefer that way of joining the meeting.

**Close 12.20pm**