



Murray Darling Association Inc.

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Region 4 Special Meeting

Wednesday 10 August 2022 – 2:30pm AEST

Venue: Virtual via Microsoft Teams

AGENDA

1. ATTENDANCE
2. APOLOGIES
3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
4. PROPOSED MOTIONS FOR THE MDA AGM
 - 4.1 Proposed Motion 1 - Mildura Rural City Council
 - 4.2 Proposed Motion 2 - Mildura Rural City Council
 - 4.3 Proposed Motion 3 - Mildura Rural City Council
 - 4.4 Proposed Motion 4 – Wentworth Shire Council/Mildura Rural City Council
 - 4.5 Late Proposed Motion 5 – Broken Hill City Council
5. CLOSE

Motion Template

Motion 1 Region 4 - Mildura Rural City Council

Motion:

To make a commitment based on science to increase the volume of water in the environmental account. With the intent of rejuvenating the health of waterways in Murray Darling Barka Basin in the driest and drought years. Considering system intake variability ephemerality and climate change.

Objective:

To open discussion on the extraordinary growth of water reliant crops in the Murray Darling Barka Basin. To critique this growth following the intent of the Water Act of 2007 and its premise to protect, preserve, and rejuvenate the waterways in the Murray Darling Barka Basin.

An overall environmental and ecological benefit would initially occur. Community and amenity benefit with an overall goal of sustainable waterways coexisting with healthy working Rivers and sustainable horticulture and agriculture.

Key Arguments:

What is the current context/issue?

*From 1997 to 2018, the irrigable area in the Mallee catchment increased by 40,825 hectares, from 40,325 hectares to 81,150 hectares. The pace of development has continued to increase since this report was completed. **In 2000, Australia had approximately 3,546 hectares (ha) of almond tree plantations. By 2019, the rapid expansion of this industry had increased almond-growing land to 53,014 ha – a 900% rise in less than 20 years***

The fact that much of this expansion has occurred in a short time, particularly within the highly compromised Murray–Darling Basin, invites questions about the water needs of permanent plantings and their role in the multiple pressures on inland water and the environment in Australia more widely.

The underlying need for a reliable supply of water sees permanent plantings along river systems facing increasing pressure from prolonged dry periods despite their substantial water requirements in a geographical area with severe and catastrophic water security issues.

The unbundling of land from water has generated an explosion of development in the River Systems and on flood plains. This has generated a Goldrush/Water rush mentality and has presented multiple challenges. There has been an ongoing drain on this scarce resource which requires a commitment to find solutions based in science.

An example of the politicized nature of decisions made without scientific scrutiny in the Basin can be explored in the 2018 Northern Basin Review. The 2018 Amendment by Federal Government, supported by the opposition reduced the water recovery target in the Northern Connected Basin from 390GL to 370GL. [Northern Disclosure - The Australia Institute](#)



What are the risks of this motion doesn't get up?

With the Rivers full from a few wet years Developers and investors overlook the destruction the millennial drought and previous droughts delivered to the Basin. With investors stalking the water market for its huge returns the Water Sector must collectively assess the risks existing through accelerated developments and diminishing intakes. The Millennium drought is a stark reminder of the ephemerality of the River's in the Murray Darling Barka Basin.



Motion 2 Region 4 - Mildura Rural City Council

Motion:

There is an immediate need for Federal, State and Municipal governments to introduce a moratorium on new agricultural and horticultural Developments. A Consideration of the capacity to develop new agricultural and horticultural land in The Murray Darling Barka Basin is an essential step in ensuring sustainability. A moratorium would assess the multiplicity of factors overlaid on the basin, including inflows, markets, politics, climate change and river system regeneration.

Objective:

This motion seeks to bring attention to the exponential growth in permanent and perennial developments in the Murray Darling Barka Basin and the system's ability to manage another millennium drought. It also deals with the volume of water needed to service all new development and developments which have not reached full production in dry and drought years.

Key Arguments:

There would be an overall environmental and ecological benefit initially, then community and amenity benefit with the overall goal of sustainable waterways coexisting with healthy working Rivers and sustainable horticulture and agriculture.

What is the current context/issue?

The rapid increase in horticulture and agriculture is putting direct pressure on water supply and system management. The scarcity of water and diminishing intakes through drought and climate change has put a drain on the security of access and allocation for Horticulture Agriculture and Environment requirements equally. An assessment based in science of these overlapping concerns would aid managing future droughts.

What are the risks of this motion doesn't get up?

Environment and ecological disaster and the reduction of farming in Australia. The desertion of towns and villages which rely on healthy connected Rivers with flow, connectivity, and people.

What is the broader benefit to Basin communities if this motion is successful?

A healthy sustainable Murray Darling Barka Basin with a return of natural ecological landscapes and sustainable farming practices.



Motion 3 Region 4 - Mildura Rural City Council

Motion:

A further exploration of the listing of the Menindee lakes as a Ramsar site. The Menindee Lakes are a refuge for people fish frogs' flora and Fauna. Region 4 request the MDA write to the relevant Federal and State Ministers seeking support in prioritizing the Menindee Lakes as a Ramsar site.

Objective:

To preserve the environmental and ecological integrity of the Menindee Lakes system and the Lower Darling Barka for communities and First Peoples. To ensure there are unregulated lengths of wild river to enhance native fish breeding through floods big medium and small.

Key Arguments:

The benefit would be on many levels. To community, first peoples, the environment, removing the stress of dry Lakes and Lower Darling Barka Fish kills. To reverse system decline and address the decline in native fish numbers, less than 10% of native fish inhabit Basin rivers.

- ***What is the current context/issue?***
With Menidee Lakes full the positives are easily seen and recorded. Now is the time to ensure protection of this unique site and its central link between the Northern and Southern Connected Basins.
- ***What are the risks of this motion doesn't get up?***
There is a risk that after the wet period the pressure on the Menindee Lakes and Lower Darling Barka will return with even greater ecological damage.
- ***What is the broader benefit to Basin communities if this motion is successful?***
The broader benefit of this motion is to guarantee flow and connectivity along the Barwon/Darling Barka Rivers. To support First People and Communities.



Motion 4 Region 4 – Wentworth Shire Council & Mildura Rural City Council

Motion:

A call to legislate the volume of floodplain harvesting to the 1995 Cap for the protection and environmental integrity of Northern NSW, Southern Queensland Rivers and Barwon Darling Barka Rivers.

Objective:

This motion is endeavoring to protect the environmental, ecological, social integrity of the lands and communities along the Rivers where unregulated floodplain harvesting has led to and exacerbated unprecedented low rivers and drought.

Key Arguments:

The communities' lands and first peoples along the River Systems in the Murray Darling Barka Basin would benefit from a healthy reliable access to water and its amenity.

What is the current context/issue?

There is a belief, matched by the unprecedented development since the Water Act was implemented in 2007, that ongoing growth and extraction is possible. This belief is bolstered through multiple wet years. A consideration of the risks already existing needs assessment because of the variability and ephemerality in Australian Rivers. A deeper engagement with outcomes of Climate Change is a necessary consideration if water intakes into the system become even more variable.

Recently the NSW ICAC called out the failure of water policy in NSW as being “unruly focused on the interests of the irrigation industry” over the rights of other users. Without intervention this unacceptable situation will continue.

Troy Grant Inspector General of Water Compliance Stated at the MDBA River Reflections forum in Mildura on the 2 of June this Year. NSW's level of accountability under the Basin Plan is not equal to that of other Basin states and the territory, each of which have accredited WRPs.

What are the risks of this motion doesn't get up?

The risks are that the water sector will again ignore multiple volumes of evidence proving mismanagement, single mindedness, and lack of engagement. The sector must intervene and not let an amoral market dictate what a finite connected system can endure through unprecedented growth and the looming reality of climate change.

What is the broader benefit to Basin communities if this motion is successful?

To ensure there is a balanced view within the Basin Rivers. Considering sustainable horticulture and agriculture, flow and connectivity within the system and a deeper engagement with climate change and climate mitigation.

