



Murray Darling Association Inc.

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Region 4 Ordinary Meeting

Thursday 29 September 2022 – 12:30pm AEST

Venue: Mildura Rural City Council, 108 Madden Avenue, Mildura VIC 3500 or
Via Video Conference (Microsoft Teams link - included in calendar invitation)

MINUTES

1. ATTENDANCE

Meeting Opened at 12:30pm

Cr Jason Modica (Mildura Rural City Council) <i>Chair of MDA Region 4</i>	Cr Daniel Linklater (Wentworth Shire Council)
Mark Lamb (MDA CEO)	Cr Steve Heywood (Wentworth Shire Council)
Tim Phillips (MDA)	Cr Tim Elstone (Wentworth Shire Council)
Cr Marion Browne (Broken Hill City Council)	Greg Hill (Central Darling Shire Council)
Mike Colreavy (Balranald Shire Council)	Penny Robinson (Mildura Rural City Council) <i>Secretariat Support</i>
Jeffery Sowiak (Balranald Shire Council)	
Guest Attendees:	
Andrew Kremor (Murray–Darling Basin Authority) Regional Manager	Sionnie Kelly (Murray–Darling Basin Authority) Communications Officer

2. APOLOGIES

Jay Nankivell (Broken Hill City Council)

3. CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Motion

That the minutes of the:

- *MDA Region 4 AGM - 31 May 2022;*
- *MDA Region 4 Ordinary Meeting - 31 May 2022; and*
- *MDA Region 4 Special Meeting - 10 August 2021*

be accepted as circulated.

Moved: Cr Steve Heywood

Seconded: Cr Jason Modica

Vote Carried

4. BUSINESS ARISING

Nil

5. REPORTS

5.1 Address from Murray–Darling Basin Authority, Mildura Area Regional Manager, Andrew Kremor

Andrew introduced himself and provided some information on his background at the MDBA. Andrew advised that there are currently 20 staff working from the Mildura Office from across all branches of the MDBA.

Andrew is currently acting as the Executive Director for Basin Strategy and Knowledge – his substantive position relates to Integrated River Management Modelling Uplift Project which is a \$56M Commonwealth funded project to get all 24 river models onto one platform and create a single modeling output. It will take approximately 4 years to complete this project work.

Andrew shared a presentation and acknowledged the Traditional Owners and their Nations of the Murray-Darling Basin. A copy of the presentation will be provided to all members.

Andrew invited question from the group:

Cr Elstone raised concerns regarding how the Murray will be managed given 9 gates are open to stop the water level going over/flooding when it catches up. Cr Modica added that this is a unique situation given the la niña period that has impacted the system and, how this transfers into delivery and monitoring of the systems.

Andrew discussed inflows and spoke to the information in his presentation. Inflows show that it has been a particularly wet August for both Dartmouth and Hume Catchments. All dams on the eastern side including Menindee are under flood management at this time.

Andrew also discussed rainfall outlook is another important factor. BOM forecast 85% chance of above average rainfall. Snow melting will also be another additional factor with additional rain. Depending on where the rainfall falls will depend on the impact. Andrew advised that the MDBA has been in full flood operations from September 2021 with only a short period that was not. Inflows are exceeding demand and has gone beyond the MDBA agreement for dam levels.

Dams need to be at 99% capacity at the end of a rain event under standard operations with only 30GL of airspace normally allowed unless operating under flood spill operations. Hume is currently releasing at 48,000ML/day. Projection is all dependent on the rainfall and where it lands. Dartmouth is spilling approximately 3,500ML/4,000ML per day and this is likely to continue and increase. The river is rising approximately 5cm per day, this is also depending on what comes out of the Murrumbidgee River. Plan to increase releases down the Darling/Wentworth.

Wentworth to be impacted by multiple inflows - water flow to develop over the next 6 weeks. In 2016, the dams were not full and still had airspace. The year 2022 already has a higher storage level already compared to 2016 flood.

MDBA continue looking at the rainfall outlook over the next few weeks.

Andrew commented on the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and Report Card – it is noted that some sustainable diversion limit adjustments are behind on their outcomes. Discussion on Minister Plibersek's 450GL modeling target and its benefits as part of the plan. Benefits are the continuity of flows through the river system. Cr Modica commented on the MDA motion relating to this.

Basin Plan review to be conducted in 2026.

Andrew advised that a report will be available in 2023 with a 2050 outlook. There will be a MDBA Mildura forum for consultation and MDA Region 4 members will be invited. In 2024 there will be an evaluation looking at the current basin plan and will inform the Basin Plan Review.

Cr Elstone discussed Menindee as part of this review and what has been learned in respect to Menindee Lakes water management. It was noted that this needs to be addressed as the rules/current agreement is wrong. Andrew advised that the agreement needs to be reviewed and

this matter addressed. Andrew encouraged all MDA members to take the opportunity to consult with MDBA as part of this review process.

Cr Elstone raised dams and the water release has been substantial over the past 18 months. Can dams be created for environmental water storage and where dams can be placed. Andrew advised that this is impacted by lower inflows and cost of storage however he will look into this further.

Cr Modica also noted that Sunraysia grape growers will struggle this year and queried what is the natural capacity in the lowest average years that does not impact growers. Andrew commented that benefits have come from the current plan however this may not be seen as a direct local impact. Discussion that consideration of future and specific environmental reserves is needed.

Cr Modica queried have any specific dams been reviewed - Andrew advised several studies have been done regarding dams. Andrew offered to have someone from the MDBA with expert knowledge to come to an MDA Region 4 meeting to answer these questions and for further discussion.

Andrew advised that there is the local MDBA office and encouraged the MDA members to approach the office as a conduit. Andrew advised that the MDBA will be keen to work with the MDA members regarding this upcoming consultation and review.

Cr Elstone queried if there is a forecast indication for the rain and estimated flows within the next week. Andrew advised that variability in forecasts swings. The next weeks forecast is 25-50mls in the catchments so this will not see a dramatic change in the next week however will change quickly with localised/heavy falls and will impact the flow rates.

Cr Modica thanked Andrew and Sionnie for attending.

A copy of the MDBA presentation from today's meeting will be provided to MDA Region 4 members. Sionnie took a few photos of the members (attending in person) for the MDBA internal newsletter.

5.2 Chair of MDA Region 4, Cr Jason Modica to provide a verbal report/update regarding his attendance at the recent MDA 2022 National Conference and AGM.

Cr Modica spoke to the recent MDA 2022 National Conference and AGM that he recently attended - he was very impressed and it was well put together. Cr Modica commented that there is so much involved with piecing together the environmental needs, existing horticulture and agriculture and the financial outcomes. The MDA event brings everyone together for these discussions in a special event. He is looking forward to the next one.

Cr Modica spoke to the motions presented and debated and advised that he withdrew a MDA motion submitted. Cr Modica commented on the suggestions from Cr Linklater in regarding submitting motions to the CEO of the MDA - CEO MDA has provided further information to Cr Modica on this. Discussion of the RAMSAR motion and what is the actual response. Cr Modica believes that the Water Act guarantees some protection to rivers to the water level of the RAMSAR site. Cr Modica will have further conversation regarding this motion with CEO MDA.

Discussion on membership drive for the MDA – there are currently 65 members. This means that the MDA is sitting at approximately half of its potential membership capacity. MDA CEO advised that the Murray-Darling Basin area has approximately 170 potential members and that the MDA will be doing a significant membership push over the next few months.

Cr Modica mentioned the financial report presented to the MDA conference and commented that Council's will be monitoring this and are understanding that there was a difficult handover period.

MDA CEO commented that the MDA is turning a corner in regards to their financial reports and are looking at other avenues for funding.

Cr Modica requested that MDA CEO email the goals to Region 4 that acknowledge the 30% reduction.

Cr Modica advised members that he will invite the author of "Sold Down the River" Stuart Kells, to come along to a future meeting to discuss markets.

Cr Modica is interested in how Region 4 can broaden its knowledge for what the market is, how it operates, how transparent it is, for the benefit of smaller farmers purchasing water.

5.3 Council Reports – each Council to provide a verbal update of activities from their region

Mildura Rural City Council:

Nothing further to add to report provided at item 5.2.

Broken Hill City Council:

Cr Browne attended the recent MDA Conference and expressed that she enjoyed attending.

Cr Browne discussed the MDA Region 4 combined councils Motion that went through without dissent. Cr Browne would now like to approach the NSW Water Minister for feedback and capitalise on this position – would like to seek feedback from the government as soon as possible.

MDA CEO commented that he agrees with Cr Browne and MDA have already commenced with action to several motions. MDA CEO advised that the Hon. Kevin John Anderson, MP - Minister for Lands and Water was invited to speak at the Conference/AGM several times however did not attend. It was noted that 19 out of 20 water papers not passed at this time for NSW and it was disappointing that the Minister did not attend.

MDA CEO will adopt a bipartisan approach to invitation/communications relating to this.

Cr Modica mentioned that Victoria and SA will also need to be included as impacts them as well.

Cr Elstone mentioned the recent disallowance of Water Management (General) Amendment (Floodplain Harvesting Access Licences) Regulation 2022 and advised that this is to be reviewed.

Cr Modica advised that a motion is required for the MDA Region 4 to approach the NSW Water Minister as suggested by Cr Browne. The following motion is proposed:

Motion

That MDA Region 4 contact the NSW Victorian and SA Water Ministers to ask for a response to Motion 6.5 of the MDA AGM.

Moved: Cr Marion Browne

Seconded: Greg Hill

Vote Carried

Wentworth Shire Council:

Cr Elstone spoke to the concerns for the management around Menindee and the 195GL storage is concerns across the three lakes. Council will continue to advocate on this concern.

Central Darling Shire Council:

Greg Hill advised that he was unable to attend the MDA Conference and their Administrator attended on his behalf. Feedback was that it was worthwhile and they agree with the sentiment of what was being discussed.

Concerns with the Darling River - LEMC's are activated and will continue to be activated until Christmas. Greg met yesterday with Water NSW and SES regarding high flows – looking at a peak that will reach Wilcannia by mid-October with approximately 10.1m in November.

This will put the Victory Caravan Park underwater by 200/300ml - the caravan park will be closed mid-October.

Some road access to Tilpa is being reviewed – some road areas need to be raised, particularly the Tonga Road to allow access to Tilpa. Several roads currently closed around the shire – Menindee/Wilcannia east side and Wilcannia/Tipla east side. These roads will remain closed until Christmas.

SES presence remains in Menindee on a daily basis due to water release and concerns for river level - will reach 9.1m and possibly more. SES are gaining an understanding on what is happening on a day-by-day basis with the levels.

Balranald Shire Council:

Mike Colreavy advised that he attended the MDA AGM (not the conference) and that he is learning in this space.

Jeff Sowiak spoke to emergency management and advise that there is a minor flood from the Murrumbidgee River and also flooding from the Lachlan River - this is impacting on some local roads. Most of the local unsealed roads are closed at this time due to the rainfall and there is existing damage on roads. The embankment and levee around the local caravan park should protect the caravan park.

Concern with still water attracting mosquitoes/Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV). LEMC on standby with sandbags ready as needed.

5.4 Water Meetings Attended

Nil

6. GENERAL BUSINESS

Mark Lamb, CEO MDA :

Mark thanked those members that attended the recent AGM and Conference either in person or virtual.

Mark also acknowledged and congratulated Cr Elstone (WSC) on his recent achievement of Life Membership announced at the recent MDA Gala Dinner.

Mark looks forward to seeing members next year at Murray Bridge.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

Thursday 8 December 2022

9am to 11am (AEDT)

108 Madden Avenue, Mildura VIC 3500 or via Microsoft TEAMS

Date noted by members - no disputes to this proposed meeting date.

8. CLOSE – 1:45pm

*The Murray Darling Association acknowledges and thanks
Mildura Rural City Council for their support in
hosting this meeting of Region 4.*