



Murray Darling Association Inc.

Region 5

www.mda.asn.au ABN: 64 636 490 493

Chairperson:
Cr Peter Raison

Hosting Council:
Mid Murray Council

Ph: 0409 594 720

Ph: 08 8569 0100

Region 5 – Ordinary Meeting

AGENDA

Monday 1 June 2020

Commencing at 10-00 am Via Zoom Video Conferencing

1. ATTENDANCE

1.1 Present:

1.2 Apologies:

1.3 Emma Bradbury, Chief Executive Officer, MDA
Cathy Keegan, Membership Services Officer, MDA

2. WELCOME

Cr Peter Raison – Chairperson Region 5

Guests:

Ben Fee – Chief Executive, Regional Development Australia Murraylands and Riverland

Tim Smythe – Chief Executive Officer, Murraylands and Riverland Local Government Association

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Material / Actual / Perceived

4. MINUTES

Moved

That the Minutes of the Murray Darling Association Region 5 Ordinary Meeting held on the 9 December 2019, are a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Seconded

5. BUSINESS ARISING

5.1 Region 5 Annual General Meeting – Ratify Nominations Received

Moved

That the following nominations submitted by Member Council's be ratified as representatives for Region 5 of the Murray Darling Association:

- Berri Barmera: Cr Kassebaum / Cr Fuller – **Voting Delegate** / Proxy
- Loxton Waikerie: Cr Walker / Cr Webber – **Voting Delegate** / Proxy
- Mid Murray: Cr Raison (Chairperson) / Cr Hall / Cr Myers – **Voting Delegate** / Proxy
- Karoonda East Murray: Cr Smith / Cr TBA – **Voting Delegate** / Proxy
- Renmark Paringa: Cr Howie / Cr Maddocks – **Voting Delegate** / Proxy
- Private Member: Ian Mann OAM
- Private Member: Malcolm Wilksch

Seconded

6. GENERAL BUSINESS

For Discussion

6.1 Opportunities to Collaborate

- Economic Diversification
- Strategic Initiatives
- Basin Community Leadership Program
- Other

6.2 Climate Ready Communities – Board meeting 392 Motion 6.2 resolved That the MDA express a statement of climate ready communities. A position statement has been drafted, with provision for each region to contribute a region profile and commitment to support their communities to be climate ready. See attached Climate Change Region template, and a draft from Region 11 which was shared at the most recent board meeting.

6.3 Motions – 2020 Murray Darling Association Annual General Meeting – The MDA has asked all Regions to begin considering potential motions for the next Annual General Meeting and encouraged Regions to engage with their member Councils to help develop the motions. A template and copy of last years motions are attached for your information and assistance.

6.4 Items for Murray Darling Association Board Meeting Agenda – Every month Chairpersons of the Regions are invited to submit relevant items (to their Regions) for inclusion on the MDA National Board Agenda. The National President will then consider these items for inclusion.

7. MDA CEO / NATIONAL AGM

7.1 [CEO's Report](#)

7.2 [Delegates report](#)

7.2 [National Conference Update](#) – 2020 Virtual Conference

8. PLANNING & COORDINATION

Meetings to be held via Zoom Video Conferencing

For discussion, meetings to be held via Zoom Video Conferencing

Region 5 Meeting Dates / Time

- 14 September 2020 – 10 am
- 14 December 2020 – 10 am
- 8 March 2021 – 10 am
- 14 June 2021 – 10 am

9. OTHER BUSINESS

10. NEXT MEETING

Date: 14 September 2020

Time: 10 am

Location: Via Zoom Video Conferencing – to be confirmed

11. CLOSE

MDA Climate Change Region Template



The Murray Darling Association (MDA) recognises that climate change is one of the most significant issues that will impact the social, cultural, economic and environmental health and wellbeing of the communities of the Murray-Darling Basin.

As a result, the MDA is currently developing its **Climate Change Position Statement and Action Plan**.

Your region's perspective is of critical importance and will directly inform the MDA's Basin-wide position statement (see p. 9 of the MDA's draft Climate Change position statement).

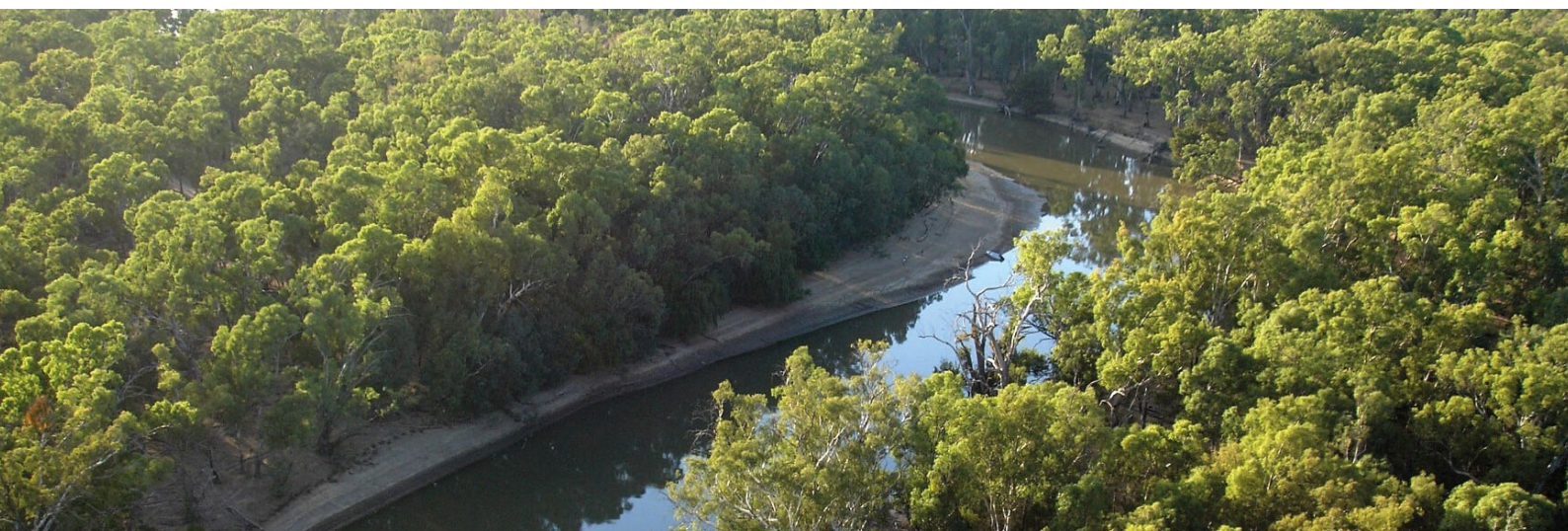
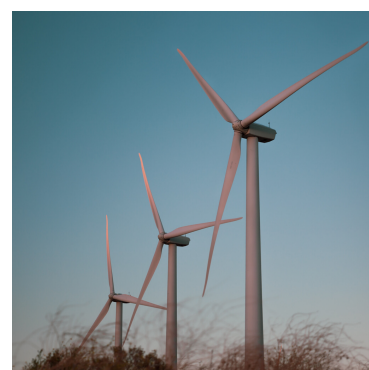
Please consult your region and provide a position statement for your region addressing the following:

- **Describe your region.**
- **What are your region's key priorities and issues?**
- **What are your region's commitment to 4 main actions to mitigate the impacts of climate change.**

(250 - 300 words)

The position statement should be completed, and sent to admin@mda.asn.au

Please include any high-quality photos of your region.





Please complete the following at your next region meeting.

Describe your region.

(250 words)

What are your region's key priorities and issues?

(250 words)

What are your region's commitment to 4 main actions to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

(250 words)

Region 11 Climate Ready Statement

Region 11 would be one of the most diverse in the Basin. It's topography ranges from the rolling hills on the eastern side to the flat plains on the west. The makeup of the various LGA's in the region also varies with the larger cities of Armidale and Tamworth down to the smaller towns of Bingara, Walcha, Uralla etc.

The topography lends itself to extremes in climate also with the freezing winters in the east to the rather hot summers in the west. Obviously the climate then affects the agricultural opportunities in each of the various LGA's. We have hydroponic tomatoes in Armidale, Citrus in Gunnedah, Pecan nuts in Moree and so on.

As well as the agricultural economy there is also mining and tourism which all lend themselves to the prosperity or not of the region. The region has limited catchments for the rivers which flow through it with what could also be construed as limited reservoirs/dams for the retention of the flows for irrigation, critical human needs and environmental use.

Key Issues and Priorities for the Region

1. Future availability of water supplies - obviously the main focus here is that for irrigation purposes, as most economies in the region rely heavily upon the agricultural industries and the associated supporting businesses. Also relying heavily on the supply of water are the townships downstream. To a lesser extent tourism and recreational activities also are reliant on the flows. Inconsistencies in the water restrictions definitions etc are also of concern. As we cover a large part of the Great Artesian Basin and rely heavily on surface water we are also reliant on recharges to the aquifers the groundwater users utilise.

2. Lack of action or what appear to be "misdecisions" on behalf of legislators/regulators - water which could be used to grow fodder used as "environmental flows". Here our worries are the fact that we have had serious droughts/bushfires/floods before and we have not learned from our experiences and put the necessary improved measures in place. "Drought is broken" politicians forget very quickly.

3. "Anti" sentiment towards CSG. This region has tremendous reserves of CSG available (no fracking required). Some of which is being utilised by Santos to boost the electricity supply at Narrabri. The water which comes from the ground with the gas is, (after being passed through a reverse osmosis process) used to irrigate pasture which is, in turn used to make fodder for animal consumption.

4. Risk management issues such as loss of human life, Council assets, financial loss, reputational risk, legal issues etc.

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Region 11 Commitment to Action

1. Renewable Energy Sources - already we have seen a start in this regard with Solar and Wind Farms having been approved and built in various LGA's.

2. As in 3 above **CSG could be used to generate base load power**. It is an extremely clean method of doing so.

3. **Carbon sequestration** can be done in one of two ways:- i) increasing soil carbon. There are various ways of doing this, or ii) growth of plantation type timbers. Once established these areas can also be utilised for grazing purposes.

4. Regular **review and testing of the region's Councils Disaster Management Plans**.

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Motion # Region # – [Proposing Council]

Motion: That the Murray Darling Association...:

- a) Details of the motion
- b) Any additional components

Objective:

Key Arguments:



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2019 NOTICE

Pursuant to Part 6 s17 (6) of the constitution

Notice is hereby given that the 75th Annual General Meeting
of

Murray Darling Association Incorporated

will be held on

Wednesday 23rd October

Commencing at 3.30pm

at

The Annex

Toowoomba City Hall

541 Ruthven St, Toowoomba, Qld 4350

The AGM will be held immediately following the conclusion of the 75th National Conference and will consider the following motions as noted on the attached table.

Agenda and full meeting papers will be published no later than Wednesday 02nd October 2019.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emma Bradbury".

Emma Bradbury
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



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MOTIONS on NOTICE

75th Annual General Meeting
Wednesday 23rd October 2019

Motions proposed to the Murray Darling Association 75th annual general meeting.

5.1	Board - Murray Darling Association	Special Motion- Constitution amendment
5.2	Region 4	RAMSAR listing Menindee Lakes
5.3	All regions - Board	Minimum flows Barwon-Darling and Lower Darling River
5.4	Region 10	Drought preparedness
5.5	Region 10	Barwon Darling priorities – safe supply
5.6	Region 9	Integrated delivery SDLAM
5.7	Region 9	Consequences of water trade
5.8	Region 9	Water Resource Plans deadline
5.9	Region 9	Balancing solar and irrigated farming
5.10	Region 6	Regional chair post local government elections
5.11	Region 6	Proxy attendance at MDA Board meetings
5.12	Region 6	Investment in nutrient load research
5.13	Region 6	Agricultural productivity target
5.14	Region 6	Population growth
5.15	Region 5	Support for water trade inquiry
5.16	Region 9	Water Trading Platform
5.17	Region 4	Water storages accounting
5.18	All regions - Board	Renewable energies
5.19	Region 4	Traditional owners' recognition
5.20	Region 12	Western River Diversion
5.21	All regions - Board	Productivity Commission Inquiry

- Motion:** That the Constitution of the Murray Darling Association be amended at
- i) Part 35 (b) such that the financial year of the MDA commences on 1 April and ends on the following 31 March, and
 - ii) Part 6 , s17 (3) such that that the annual general meeting of the MDA must be held between 1 April and 30 September in a particular year.

Objective:

To change the financial year status of the Murray Darling Association. This would assist with the MDA National Conference and AGM clashing with State-based Local Government Association Annual General Meetings and local government elections in future years.

Key Arguments:

Up to 2018, the MDA National Conference has been held between early September and late October.

The 74th National Conference, hosted by Region 9 and Leeton Shire Council, occurred in late August 2018 prior to South Australia member councils going into caretaker mode in mid-September.

Changing the MDA's financial year to 1 January – 31 December will enable the National Conference and AGM to occur during the first half of the year and avoid the very crowded calendar of the reporting/conference season.

NSW Government Fair Trading, under which the MDA is incorporated requires that an association's committee must ensure that an annual general meeting (AGM) is held within 6 months after the association's financial year-end. An association's constitution must specify its financial year.

Part 6 s17 (3) of the MDA constitution requires that the annual general meeting must be held between 1 July and 30 November in a particular year.

To change the financial year would require a change to the constitution, ergo a motion to the National Conference.

NOTE: As this is a special motion it must pass by a vote of 75% to carry.

Motion: That the MDA calls on Basin Governments to endorse the Menindee Lakes, or a portion of the Lake system to be listed as a Ramsar site, in further consultation with the community.

Objective:

To protect the Menindee Lakes as a wetlands of cultural and ecological significance and to preserve and to conserve, through wise use and management, those areas of the system identified as appropriate for listing.

Key Arguments:

- In 2010-11 there were attempts to have a proportion of the Menindee Lakes recognised as being listed as a Ramsar site. Regional Development Australia Far West NSW (RDAFW) invested resources and efforts into having a proportion of the Lakes listed as a Ramsar Sites on behalf of Central Darling Shire and the Far West region. At this point in time, the State Government recognised the significance of the Menindee Lakes, however they were not able to support the project with the position of the Murray Darling Basin plan at the time.
- Ramsar Convention and signing on Wetlands took place on 2 February 1971 at the small Iranian town named Ramsar and came into force on 21 December 1975. Since then, the Convention on Wetlands has been known as the Ramsar Convention. The Ramsar Convention's intentions is to halt the worldwide loss of wetlands and to conserve, through wise use and management, of those that remain. This requires international cooperation, policy making, capacity building and technology transfer.
- Under the Ramsar Convention, a wide variety of natural and human-made habitat types ranging from rivers to coral reefs can be classified as wetlands. Wetlands include swamps, marshes, billabongs, lakes, salt marshes, mudflats, mangroves, coral reefs, fens, peat bogs, or bodies of water - whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary. Water within these areas can be static or flowing; fresh, brackish or saline; and can include inland rivers and coastal or marine water to a depth of six metres at low tide. The Ramsar Convention encourages the designation of sites containing representative, rare or unique wetlands, or wetlands that are important for conserving biological diversity. Once designated, these sites are added to the Convention's List of Wetlands of International Importance and become known as "Ramsar" sites. In designating a wetland as a Ramsar site, countries agree to establish and oversee a management framework aimed at conserving the wetland and ensuring its wise use. Wise use under the Convention is broadly defined as "maintaining the ecological character of a wetland".
- There are 66 Ramsar sites in Australia, covering 8.3 million hectares. The Office of Environment and Heritage NSW is responsible for managing the majority of Ramsar wetlands in NSW, including: Blue Lake (in Kosciuszko NP), Gwydir Wetlands (part only - Gwydir Wetlands SCA), Hunter Estuary Wetlands (Kooragang component), Lake Pinaroo (in Sturt NP), Little Llangothlin NR, Macquarie Marshes (Macquarie Marshes NR component), Myall Lakes, Narran Lakes, NSW Central Murray State Forests (Millewa Forests and Werai Forests components), Paroo River Wetlands and Towra Point NR.
- The four Councils in the Far South West Joint Organisation (FSWJO) have endorsed the Menindee Lakes to be listed as a Ramsar site. At this stage, it is proposed that the RDAFW will manage the project by preparing and updating existing documentation at a cost; which isn't clear at this stage what this will be.

Motion 3 Murray Darling Association

Motion: That the Murray Darling Association support the call on the NSW Government and Murray-Darling Basin Authority, to ensure that

- a) the NSW Water Sharing Plans and Resource Management Plans for the Barwon-Darling, Murray-Lower Darling and Northern Basin Rivers must include minimum river flow and storage levels that will protect the health of the Barwon-Darling and Lower Darling River from the Queensland border to the Murray River.
- b) Minimum flows at sites along the Barwon-Darling and Lower Darling River, in particular at Wilcannia, and water storage volumes in the Menindee Lakes must be reached before extraction of water for irrigation is allowed.

Objective:

To develop strength and unity across multiple communities of interest in the restoration, protection and effective management for the long term health of the Barwon-Darling and Lower Darling River from the Queensland border to the Murray River.

Key Arguments:

Development of a similar position statement has lately been complete by a key working group of the Murray Lower Darling SAP, and was subsequently endorsed by a range of community groups and representatives including industry groups and First Nations.

The long term health and effective management of the Barwon and Lower Darling systems are essential to every system across the Murray-Darling Basin.

Motion: That the Murray Darling Association calls on the Federal Government to provide ongoing assistance for drought preparedness in the form of low interest innovation, water infrastructure and drought assistance loans, training and professional development in business management for farmers and continued support for Rural Financial counsellors to work with farmers long term, with the understanding that drought is part of the normal cycle of farming and needs to be planned for.

Objective:

To help “drought proof” the country and in turn reduce the impact drought has on agricultural production, exports, the economy, people’s lifestyle and the assistance needed at times of crisis.

Key Arguments:

- Drought preparedness is a nationwide issue as all areas of Australia face drought at some time and all areas of Australia contribute to vital agricultural production. Federal assistance and planning can help “drought proof” the country and in turn reduce the impact drought has on agricultural production, exports, the economy, people’s lifestyle and the assistance needed at times of crisis.
- There is a huge need to expand and foster long term investment by farmers in drought infrastructure. The measures that support drought preparedness will not be taken up during drought due to the hardship faced, however in good times these measures are likely to be adopted and best utilized. These long-term measures must be available all the time not just at times of crisis.
- The Farm Household Assistance is the most controversial drought support measure available. It is taxable so doesn’t offer farmers long term assistance and the need to repay this when tax thresholds are reached can impact on their ability to recover from drought. The basis of this assistance is in contradiction to some of the most basic farm management recommendations in drought which highlights destocking as one of the first actions to be taken. The process of destocking boosts income which may result in farmers needing to pay tax or have their FHA cancelled.
- Other issues with this type of assistance are in regard to how assets are treated, when assets such as land and livestock are needed for farmers to extract themselves from drought. Only 10% of eligible applicants are receiving this payment due to people not being able to negotiate eligibility criteria and experiencing difficulties with the bureaucratic process.
- Currently 99% of NSW is in drought with Australia as a whole experiencing rainfall deficiency and drought conditions in conjunction with record heat over summer months. Rural areas of Australia are under extreme duress, some areas especially in rural Queensland have been experiencing continuous drought for nearly 7 years.

Motion: That the Murray Darling Association call on the Federal and State Government to address the urgent need for action on the Darling Barwon river system to ensure that the supply of safe drinking water and flows for stock and domestic use is the priority at all times, including priority over and above the release of water from dams for large scale irrigation, irrespective of the circumstances in which allocations have been pre-purchased or pre-allocated for large scale irrigation.

Objective:

To ensure the supply of safe drinking water and flows for stock and domestic use for water-users and communities on the Darling Barwon River systems.

Key Arguments:

- Water is a scarce resource and in times of drought the value of water increases the dryer it becomes, however it seems that large scale irrigators do not face the same issues as other farmers reliant on water for on farm use and that town water supplies are of less value than the needs of large scale irrigators.
- If the Governments both NSW and QLD, had imposed an embargo on irrigation for three weeks, the water released from State owned Dams and local storm events would have easily filled the town weirs along the river and provided a much-needed flush for local stock and domestic use. The fish kills experienced at Menindee and other areas could have been avoided if the priority was changed.
- The economic benefits from growing and exporting cotton do not outweigh the benefits from having water for stock and domestic use. It's time for a rethink on where the priorities are and to make timely, tough decisions in the best interests of the river communities. Just as no one can guarantee rain, Governments should not enter into agreements to provide water for large scale irrigation when there are higher priorities.
- We have recently observed the release of pre-allocated irrigation water for large scale irrigation at a time when Walgett, Bourke, Menindee and smaller communities along the Barwon Darling river system were either completely out of water or on severe restrictions and major fish kills were regular events. When questioned on the issue, the NSW Minister for Water responded by saying that there had been no allocation of water and that the 3gl of water a day that was being released was water had been stored in dams from previous storm events. It also seems that recent rain events in QLD were not permitted to flow down the river into NSW despite the desperate need. It seems absurd that the Governments would withhold water that could have been used to provide for stock and domestic use and town water supplies, simply because of the allocation system in place and that water was needed for large scale irrigation.

Motion: That the Murray Darling Association calls on the Federal and State Governments to immediately and proactively heed the Productivity Commission’s recommendation for better governance and integrated delivery of the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism Projects as well as more realistic timeframes for delivery of those Projects.

Objective:

Ensure robustness and integrity of sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism program including ensuring inferior Projects aren’t rushed through and regretted later.

Key Arguments:

- The 605GL suite of projects is ambitious and in order to prevent large amounts of taxpayer funds being wasted on projects that may not deliver the anticipated environmental outcomes, it is recommended that projects be independently and critically reviewed before they are approved.
- Further, realistic implementation timeframes should be applied (and legislation adjusted accordingly) to ensure the Basin benefits from meaningful, sustainable results rather than being left with disappointing outcomes through the reckless rushing through of projects to meet an arbitrary policy deadline.
- As an example, the Yanco SDLAM Projects are estimated to cost \$85M and deliver between 12 to 28 GL per annum of environmental watering benefits. However, there are grave concerns from credentialed environmentalists and the local Wiradjuri community that the proposed works will effectively compromise rather than enhance biodiversity in the system, most especially the installation of an offtake regulator at the head of the Creek. Governments and communities need confidence through independent review that the environmental outcomes of the Yanco Projects will be genuinely achievable and should feel satisfied that the available funding isn’t being opportunistically leveraged to deliver capital works projects seeking to primarily improve the business cases of Water NSW and various irrigation companies.

Motion 7 Region 9

- Motion:** That the Murray Darling Association calls on Federal and State governments to
- i) recognise, value, protect and honour the significant investment by taxpayers over many decades to establish irrigation schemes to feed the nation, and
 - ii) immediately place a moratorium on the development or opening of new irrigation farms downstream of long-established irrigation areas until the Basin Plan objectives are fully met and the full implications (environmental, economic and social) of the further geographic distribution of water entitlements is properly researched and understood.
 - iii) ensure that existing irrigation schemes are optimally utilised and are not subject to ongoing exacerbating swiss cheese effect through poor and / or silo-ed policy decisions and ineffectual land use planning that fails to consider implications for the Basin Plan.
 - iv) engage meaningfully with and have genuine regard to the findings of the ACCC Inquiry into water trading that is underway, and
-

Objective:

Understand and respond to the unintended consequences of current water trading policies/ rules/ regulations

Key Arguments:

- The current lack of transparency and loose operations surrounding the sale and purchase of water makes it practically impossible for rural communities with water dependent economies to effectively navigate and plan their desired futures. There is also growing awareness that the notion that 'water will go to the highest value crop' is not necessarily in the best interest of the nation or Basin communities, be that socially, economically or environmentally.
- What must absolutely be avoided in the Basin is a farming and food/fibre processing sector that has all its eggs in one basket. The Basin needs to foster resilience through diversity, which gives appropriate latitude to responsibly harness the wet years and sustainably endure the dry years.
- The development of an unregulated water trading market, compounded by loose land use planning and energy strategies whose integration extends only to the location of transmission lines, is undermining the sustainability and true potential of nation building irrigation schemes to deliver optimal farm production in the Basin using the least amount of water.
- Formal Irrigation areas or schemes were nation building investments originally funded through significant taxpayer investment from the late 1800s. Their true value needs to be understood and appreciated in today's dollars, as well as their full potential as vehicles to more efficiently deliver Basin Plan outcomes. Arguably worth multi-billions of dollars, and well capable of providing optimal agricultural production with least loss of water, the Basin's irrigation areas instead being systematically eroded by a suite of government policies that fail to recognise the value of the whole as opposed to the value of the parts (individual farms).

- Water is a lifegiving force and a critical input into Australia's farming endeavours. Even though it can be bought and sold, water should never be considered a commodity. With Australia being a dry country, every drop of water counts and must be used responsibly, including across the Murray Darling Basin. A responsible citizenry and responsible governments must ensure that a megalitre released from a dam will realise as close to a megalitre on the farm, with minimal losses.

Motion: That the MDA calls on Basin governments to extend the 2019 deadline for approval of such Water Resource Plans where there are complex changes required and there are material risks to the quality of the plans.

Objective:

To ensure sufficient opportunity for the careful and considered development of Water Resource Plans in which Basin Plan communities can have full confidence

Key Arguments:

- In some WRP Areas, significant rule changes may be needed to meet Basin Plan requirements. Stakeholders are justifiably concerned that if WRPs are rushed to meet the accreditation deadline, changes could affect the reliability of their entitlements or not sufficiently protect environmental water. They are concerned that there is not enough time left to properly examine and test the proposed changes before they become law.
- For a few WRP areas, significant changes to local water management arrangements (which are often defined in State legislative instruments) are needed to meet Basin Plan requirements and achieve the outcomes of the Plan. These include:
 - changing rules that define permitted water take
 - changing rules that protect environmental flows, including those to shepherd environmental water in connected water resources
 - implementing PPMs (particularly in New South Wales)
 - managing water quality and the supply of critical human water needs in extreme events.
- It is critical that Basin Governments provide adequate time to conduct the detailed analysis and consultation required to understand local issues, identify and test feasible solutions and make the necessary amendments to rules and supporting documents. There is insufficient time left to do this well.

Motion: That the Murray Darling Association calls on

- i. Basin Governments to revise their state-based planning instruments to have regard to the significant contribution of established irrigation areas to providing food security and generating export earnings for the region, state and commonwealth when state significant development applications are being assessed. Such as the NSW Infrastructure State Environmental Planning Policies that applies to large solar farm applications.
- ii. Basin Governments, should schemes still be approved, to make compulsory development contributions by solar companies commensurate with the loss of a typical crop to the wider processing and freight economy, for the life of the solar project.

Objective:

To protect prime irrigation land from being sterilised through silo-ed energy policies.

Key Arguments:

- Development Applications for the construction of large-scale solar farms in regional areas have risen in recent years. While the move to renewable energy sources is viewed as a positive for long-term environmental outcomes, it should not come at the cost of productive farmland, particularly those tracts of Basin lands located within nation building irrigation areas that form the food bowls of Australia.
- Most importantly, Basin Governments should recognise that irrigation farms should never be viewed in isolation of the whole irrigation area and its associated infrastructure when making decisions about the location of solar farms.
- It is the position of the National Farmers Federation to achieve a goal of Agricultural production reaching \$100bn by 2030.

Motion 10 Region 6

Motion: That the MDA adopt a policy which facilitates continuity of Region leadership in Local Government election years, with the Region AGM to be held as soon as practicably possible after the outcome of Local Government elections is known.

Objective: Continuity and information flow from one Region Chair to the next during local government election years, should a Region Chair not be re-elected to office as an Elected Member.

Key Arguments:

- Continuity of leadership (and thus succession planning) is important for ensuring the Regions operate effectively and efficiently.
- Convention dictates that Region Chairs are an Elected Member of a Member Council, noting that pursuant to Clause 16(5) of the Constitution, the chair must demonstrate both the initial and ongoing capacity to provide secretariat support for the activities of the Region.
- Regional Chairs are elected (or re-elected) annually. Refer clause 16(4) of the MDA Constitution.
- General local government elections are held every 4 years where the current Regional Chair may, by default, lose their Region Chair position if they are not re-elected to office as an Elected Member. Refer clause 10(1)(b) of the MDA Constitution.
- In these circumstances, the Region Chair vacates and the Region Executive may appoint a temporary chair and a new chair must be appointed at the next Region Meeting. Refer clause 16(5)(b) of the MDA Constitution.
- This created some challenges for Region 6 following the November 2018 local government election, at which two key members of the Region Executive, including the Region Chair were not returned as Elected Members. In the intervening period before the election of a new Region Chair, Region 6 was not represented on the MDA Board and Region 6 momentum was lost. Refer clause 10(3) of the MDA Constitution.
- The motion requests that the Board turn their mind to how continuity of leadership and information flow between outgoing and incoming Region Chairs might best be maintained in such circumstances, within the constraints of the current Constitution.

Motion 11 Region 6

Motion: That the MDA consider possible constitutional change which would enable a nominated member of the Region Executive to attend MDA Board meetings as proxy for Region Chair should the Region Chair be unavailable to attend.

Objective: To maximise opportunity for representation from each of the MDA regions at all MDA Board meetings.

Key Arguments:

- Currently if a Region Chair is unable to attend a Board meeting, whether due to illness or some other reason, they are unable to nominate a proxy (i.e. another member of the Region Executive) to attend and vote at the Board meeting on their behalf.
- Refer clause 13(1)(c) of the MDA Constitution which provides as follows: *At a meeting of the Board al voting shall be by ordinary resolution of the majority of the Board members present (there will be no proxy voting).*
- This motion asks that the Board develop a proposal to be considered at the next AGM for constitutional change, to enable a nominated member of the Region Executive to attend MDA Board meetings as proxy for Region Chair should the Region Chair be unavailable to attend.
- In the interim (i.e. until constitutional change can be enacted) it is suggested that if a Region Chair is unable to attend a Board meeting, another member of the Region Executive (as nominated by the Region Chair and communicated to the CEO prior to the commencement of the Board meeting) be permitted to attend Board meetings to participate in Board discussions but without the benefit of voting rights.

Motion: That the MDA advocate for increased State and Federal government investment in research that articulates the impact of nutrient load in the Murray Darling Basin as a result of current and forecast increased fertiliser and herbicide usage from agriculture in the run-off zone, reports on findings, and identifies alternatives that will reduce nutrient loads.

Objective: To ensure water quality in the MDB is maintained or improved.

Key Arguments:

Some countries such as America spend billions every year removing nutrients from water ways. Some water ways in NZ are un wade able due to nutrient loads poisoning water.

Use of fertiliser and herbicides are increasing nationally. We risk run off into our water ways and pollution resulting in algal blooms and fish kills.

The Federal Government would like a 40 pc increase in farm gate output by 2030 and there is risk that a further increased reliance on fertilisers and herbicides will result.

Investment needs to be made to ensure we do not risk further polluting the MDB via nutrient run off. We call for this.

Investment in to alternative fertilisers or solutions such as dung beetle burial of dung (also causing nutrient excess) should be called for.

Motion: That the Murray Darling Association call on Australia's Government and the National Farmers Federation to ensure that the agricultural productivity target is to be supported by a research program to develop innovative strategies for achieving the target in a water constrained future, including via the use of alternative water sources.

Objective:

To identify such new technologies and innovations such as may generate more production from the existing allocation of water for agricultural uses, and will support sustainable intensification of our agricultural productivity.

Key Arguments:

There are limits to water allocation and arable land within the MDB which constrain further increased agricultural production so opportunities must come from smarter use of these resources.

Other opportunities to meet the target are value added foods, smaller packaged amounts with higher value or more pre-prepared foods. These value added foods will increase value of production using the same amount of food already produced. At the same time we need to meet the demand for high quality, fresh, locally grown foods.

A Future Food CRC is being established with 6 hubs: Darwin, Western Sydney, Peel Region (WA, south of Perth), Coffs Harbour NSW, Armidale NSW, Mildura Vic. However as there is only the Mildura hub for servicing the Murray Darling Basin Region 6 is looking for a greater commitment to investigate all opportunities Basin wide.

Research into developing and exploiting alternative water sources need to be developed if the target is to be met which will need to come from outside the MDB.

Research into commodities that use less water per \$ of output or less water per kg of produce are needed . This can inform current enterprises that are water hungry to transition into more profitable and viable enterprises under less water.

Motion 14 Region 6

Motion: That the Murray Darling Association engage with the Federal Government on how it intends to facilitate population growth whilst maximizing socio-economic benefits for regional communities and mitigating risks to the health of the Murray-Darling Basin system.

Objective:

To understand

- where major growth is predicted to occur
- how more water will be available to any increased populations within the MDB
- the regional population targets within the MDB
- impacts of population growth outside the MDB within the MDB
- how services will be maintained to regional centres with population growth, particularly for locations where provision of services are already under pressure
- how the health of the River will be maintained when more water will be required to meet human needs under population growth

Key Arguments:

If population growth is to occur within the MDB water resources will be under greater pressure to meet all socio-economic needs, including agricultural production, environmental and developmental needs at the same or better level.

Facilities in most regional centres are already under pressure - medical, social, mental health support to meet demand. Increasing population without addressing the capacity of services and water resources will only add pressure to existing community's services that are already struggling.

Motion:

- i) That the MDA continues to publicly support the ACCC Investigation
 - ii) That the MDA calls for the continual move toward transparency of all water trading and water trading mechanisms in the Murray-Darling Basin including the access to water trading information.
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Objective:

To allow local growers to be able to better manage their water portfolios, armed with the knowledge (which is currently only available to those who can fund expensive analysis of water trading) to compete on a level playing field with large corporate conglomerates, who are affecting the market significantly, at the detriment of local growers, who are really good at growing crops but rarely that proficient in managing their water portfolio

Key Arguments:

The growers are forced to become Water experts (overnight) and study the water markets to hopefully make the best decisions for their businesses but the reality is, they are really good at growing crops but rarely that proficient in managing their water portfolio as well as managing the remainder of their business.

The Irrigators have been forced to compete (due the unbundling of Water from land) with Corporate investors armed with all the analytical information at their fingertips about the right time to trade water. The irrigators do not have access, or the acumen to collate all the information about the amount of water that has been traded from each state so they know when water will become tight or in high demand etc.

The SA, NSW and Victorian Water authorities have all the information re the volumes of water used, traded both intra and interstate and the trends associated with how people traditionally trade their water & the growers should be armed with all this information which is freely available but needs someone to collate all the states and put it together in a meaningful format.

Water investors are armed with this information and pay analysts to provide that level of information and we think the growers should be allowed access to the same level of information so they can make informed decisions.

It would fair & reasonable to see everyone armed with the same information provided by a non-bias provider.

- Motion:** That the Murray Darling Association calls on Federal and State governments to
- i. Develop a transparent National Water Trading Platform which will serve as a single source of information on water, from recovery targets to allocations, through to sales (whether permanent or temporary)
 - ii. Require routine disclosure statements by larger water holders (such as any person or entity that owns upwards of 2% of available entitlements in an area or any water trading companies), and
 - iii. Require routine disclosure by banks of any debts recovered through forced water sales in irrigation farming areas
-

Objective:

Provide Australians with easy access to information about water holdings and water trading to ensure an agricultural future that is fair, informed and not prone to manipulation or speculation.

Key Arguments:

- Finding information of water recovery targets, water holdings, and water sales is frustratingly difficult. It should be simple to find and located in one place.
- Sometimes information is released too late - it should be available in real time.
- Until we understand the full picture, we are less able to respond to the unintended consequences of water trading policies / rules / regulations
- There is increasing concern that people with inside knowledge or large water holdings can manipulate markets or hold farmers to ransom
- There is some evidence of banks choosing to recover farm debt by forcing farmers to sell their water entitlements, which serves only to make the farmer less productive. Banks view water entitlements as 'easy money'.
- recognise and properly evaluate the compounding effects of an unregulated water trading environment and the implementation of the Murray Darling Basin Plan on the viability and sustainability of established nation building irrigation schemes that would be unaffordable to replicate today and consider how these should be optimised to ensure the most responsible use of available water for agricultural endeavour. In particular, the advantages of a diversified agricultural sector within established irrigation systems to GDP, and its associated local economic and community resilience, should be weighed up against the risk of shifting water to monoculture-based 'high value' crops on greenfield (cheaper) lands downstream of the established irrigation schemes.

Motion 17 Region 4 – Wentworth Shire Council

Motion: That the MDA request from the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources and the MDBA a complete accounting of all water storages, including open channels, diversions and on-farm storages holding un-metered water in temporary storages, for public release.

Objective:

There is concern that water is being held outside of the river channel, which would better contribute to connectivity, river health and recharge of groundwater.

Key Arguments:

The trope that water travelling along the river systems to the ends of the rivers is wasted water, which could go to the highest value use. What this value ignores is the need for rivers to flow, flush, provide habitat and restore riverine ecosystems, occasionally flood and provide overbank flows and pulse, to promote fish recruitment and movement across the Basin.

Motion: That the Murray Darling Association calls on the Australian Government to provide direct funding to assist local government to address the risks of climate change through the development of renewable energy facilities and support related community actions.

Objective:

To assist all communities across the Murray-Darling Basin to reduce emissions and to support communities to adapt and respond to the impacts of changing climatic conditions.

Key Arguments:

- Community solar farms and local energy sharing provide environmentally and financially beneficial outcomes by enabling solar bulk buys, supporting local jobs, local suppliers and ultimately more affordable energy.
- The economic, social and environmental prosperity of Australia is dependent on stable, competitively priced, supply of low emission energy.
- In recent years, there has been very little Australian Government funding available to local government to implement mitigation actions. For many resource-constrained Councils finding funds to reduce their own fossil fuel-based energy profile, through the implementation of building, lighting and fleet upgrades is extremely difficult, with many competing community needs. Significant action is required now, not in the future when the change is irreversible.

Motion: That the Murray Darling Association calls on the Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition and Water Minister, to recognise concerns from Indigenous groups, traditional owners and custodians that:

- a) they are unable to continue cultural practices, due to lack of cultural flows;
- b) there is an increased financial impost on high Indigenous population towns for drinking water, where same is unavailable, or of poor quality;
- c) a lack of genuine, integrated and informed consultation has been the norm in matters of water management and projects which directly affect native title holders, traditional custodians and Land Council groups and individuals, combined with lack of feedback or Minutes from meetings with Government representatives and agencies; and
- d) local First Nations people hold knowledge from greater timelines than current records about flows, floods, movement and interplay of the entire riverine ecology, yet there is a resistance to engaging with that knowledge, utilising the skills and management practices used for many centuries (45,000 years in our region), despite clear desire from most groups to assist and play a more active role in water and land management. That the Murray Darling Association...:

Objective:

For the knowledge, experience and expertise of indigenous peoples to be heard in political decisions made about their rights and interests, particularly in regard to the management of Basin resources.

Key Arguments:

There is a sense of continuing colonialism mentality, ignoring or paying only lip service to First Nations engagement, as water is taken away and has been shown to increase crime, decrease health outcomes and reduce opportunities to pass on cultural practices and traditional ceremony.

“There may be Native Title, but they took away our Water Rights” - Badger Bates

Motion 20 Region 12

Motion: That the Murray Darling Association call on the National Water Infrastructure Grid Taskforce to inquire into the merits and feasibility of a water river diversion scheme to enhance the sustainability of the Murray Darling Basin.

Objective:

To increase inflows into the river systems to enhance productivity and sustainability of the southern connected basin.

Key Arguments:

- Over the decades, there has been a number of investigations with respect to water diversion into the Murray Darling Basin. A number, which appear to have merit.
- There has been little progress with such investigations.
- The whole of the Murray Darling Basin has the opportunity to benefit from a diversion scheme.
- A properly considered diversion scheme may also provide other tangible benefits such as producing power.
- The opportunity cost of not having a river diversion scheme is a sustainable Murray Darling Basin.

- **Motion:** That the Murray Darling Association calls on the Federal Treasurer to establish an independent inquiry to be undertaken by the Productivity Commission to enquire into the relationship between the National Agriculture Plan 2030 and the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, with particular reference to
 - i) the risks to the implementation of either Plan to the extent of any inconsistencies or conflict of policy or priority between the two plans.
 - ii) the risks and opportunities for local communities in the implementation of the Ag Plan.
 - iii) the benefits of having a coordinated social and economic impact analysis underpinning an agreed implementation framework.
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Objective

To mitigate the risk of tension or failure between two potentially competing or conflicting Plans.

To maximise the benefits and opportunities for rural and regional communities.

To protect the interests of both the environment and investors in a time of changing water availability.

To protect the investment of the Australian people in the development and implementation of the Murray Darling Basin Plan to date.

To encourage fund and facilitate the sustainable increase of agricultural productivity.

Key Arguments

- The National Agriculture Plan establishes a courageous goal to exceed \$100 billion in farm gate output by 2030.
- The Federal department of Agriculture has established a task force.
- Such a plan will almost certainly have an impact on markets, delivery requirements and total water availability in the Murray-Darling Basin.
- An independent inquiry by the Productivity Commission will identify potential risk and opportunities, and will provide information that may inform better policy and support communities to capitalise on the benefits presented.