



Murray Darling Association Inc.

Region 11

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**Region 11 Ordinary Meeting
10:02am, Friday 18 August 2023
Gunnedah Shire Council, Council Chambers, held in person and via Zoom**

MINUTES – Friday 18 August 2023

Acknowledgement to Country

I would like to acknowledge all first nations people as the traditional custodians of the lands on which we gather today. I would also like to pay respect to elders both past, present and emerging and extend that respect to any Aboriginal Australians present today.

ATTENDANCE

Present

Cr Jamie Chaffey	Gunnedah Shire Council
Cr Russell Webb	Tamworth Regional Council
Mr Mark Lamb	Chief Executive Officer, Murray Darling Association (via Zoom)
Ms Kate Dight	Inverell Shire Council (via Zoom)
Cr Greg Sauer	Tenterfield Shire Council (via Zoom)
Cr David Coulton	Gwydir Shire Council (via Zoom)
Cr Robert Bell	Uralla Shire Council (via Zoom)
Mr Greg Ringwood	CEWH - Local Engagement Officer, Northern Basin (via Zoom)
Mr Tim Phillips	MDA, Communications & Engagement Officer (via Zoom)

Apologies

Cr Doug Hawkins	Mayor, Liverpool Plains Shire Council
Ms Annabelle Guest	MDBA - Regional Engagement Officer, Namoi Gwydir
Ms Jane Humphries	DCCEEW - Delivery Officer, Northern Basin Section (Moree)
Cr Lyndon Mulligan	Gwydir Shire Council
Cr Robert Hoddle	Gunnedah Shire Council
Mr Andrew Johns	Director Planning & Environmental Services, Gunnedah Shire Council
Mr Bruce Logan	Tamworth Regional Council

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Nil

PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

That the meeting minutes of the General Meeting of Murray Darling Association Inc Region 11 held on Friday 19 May 2023, as typed and circulated, be confirmed as a true record of the proceedings of that meeting.

ACTION: That the minutes of the Murray Darling Association Inc Region 11 General Meeting held on Friday 19 May 2023, be accepted.

Moved Cr Greg Sauer / Seconded Cr Russell Webb

CEO REPORTS SINCE LAST REGION 11 MEETING (MR MARK LAMB)

Mr Mark Lamb, CEO of Murray Darling Association, provided an update:

- Currently visiting Region 7 Councils, which is Adelaide and surrounds, the lower part of the Murray.
- Recently visited Region 11 Councils along with Chairperson Cr Chaffey, also its great to see some more faces on line that haven't attended these meetings before.
- CEO reports are available on the MDA Website.
- **Membership** – is a key part of the peak body, the trip to Region 11 was of paramount importance for membership.
- We weren't sure why some councils had dropped out in recent years, it was lovely to be welcomed by those communities. Day 1 we went up to Tenterfield, then down and across to Inverell, Moree, Narrabri and then Gunnedah. The key feedback that we felt very welcomed and very positive discussions, key take away is about water security. Region 11 is protecting the water for the future to have viable communities.
- We currently are at a point where we can influence the Murray Darling Basin Plan 2, as we Review the Murray Darling Basin Plan 1 and give feedback, so this is the pivotal time where we can influence the future of water security and make a difference. Mayor and CEO's on our visit had very positive responses.
- MDA Membership is encouraging, and we were delighted last year to see Tamworth Regional Council back into the water family and we look forward to encouraging other Councils into the water family as well.
- **Engagement** – we continue to engage very strongly with various organisations and currently are partnering with CSIRO with a range of activities such as water, water future and water security and circular economy.
- One Basin, CRC, SQNSW Drought Resilience Hub, these partnerships are strengthening.
- A number of researches from Sydney University are actually looking at doing research in Region 11 (Northern Basin), they want to talk about Water Security and Water Sharing Plans, not just environment impacts, but also social and economic impacts on communities. If you would like to be involved, please let MDA know.
- Research into the social impacts of water buybacks (recent work), Mark and Kate to discuss after this meeting.
- We are continuing to engage and follow-up on the 13 motions that were passed at the last AGM, plus other motions throughout the year as in previous years, we have done a lot of advocacy in recent months, talking to Water Ministers (Federal and State) and a range of other bureaucrats, we can see the difference between the motions that got passed and the actions resulting from that.
- The 79th MDA National Conference is being held in Murray Bridge, South Australia, last week of September, welcome everyone to register to attend. In 2022 the MDA National Conference was held in Albury.
- Mr Lamb went through the Conference Program, which is available on the MDA Website and it's great to see a submission from Region 11 for the 2024 National Conference.
- Mr Lamb also provided an update on the Guest Speakers for the Conference at Murray Bridge, see the Conference Program on the MDA Website for these guest speakers details. Along with Ministers there will be Farmers, Academics, Bureaucrats, Irrigators, Commerce and Industry, a balanced approach with speakers to talk about the communities and what the social and economic impacts are, what has happened as a result of the floods, how do we as a community prepare better for droughts and floods in the future.
- Minister Rose Jackson MLC, Minister for Water is planning on attending, but has not yet confirmed her attendance, the Shadow Minister for Water, Ms Steph Cooke MP, has confirmed that she will be attending.

Due to Ms Guest being an apology for today's meeting, Councillor Jamie Chaffey read through Ms Annabelle Guest's report which was emailed through for today's meeting.

Annabelle Guest, Regional Engagement Officer, Namoi Gwydir, Murray-Darling Basin Authority (Narrabri)

Current status of dams – Namoi

- Lake Keepit 98% capacity, Split rock 100% capacity, most accounts at 180 to 200% of allocation

MDBA River Reflections Conference in Narrabri – mid June

- Key Note speaker Professor N. LeRoy Poff from the University of Canberra and Colorado State University
- In the Colorado River Basin we are in a vicious water cycle of overuse, overtake and under regulation, and the latest projections are frightening," Professor Poff said.
- "Demand for water in the Colorado River Basin is now exceeding supply and by 2030, we're looking at a shortfall in excess of 750 giganlitres, not accounting for climate change.
- Visited Merced Farms, Sydney Uni PBI and Narrabri Fish Farm
- Release of the Roadmap to 2026 Basin Plan Review

Basin Plan Review – 4 key themes

- Climate change – how can the Basin Plan be improved to respond to climate change?
- SDL's (WRP's) How do we ensure a sustainable Basin delivering best outcomes for social cultural environmental and economic values
- First Nations - How can the Basin Plan be improved to better recognise First Nations involvement in water management and enhance their involvement
- Regulatory Design – How can the Basin Plan framework be simplified? Engagement on what we heard)

Report Card on Basin Plan progress – released 6 monthly (end July)

Reg Flags

- MDB Authority met on July 2023 – officially advised minister Plibersek on current state of the Basin Plan Implementation. Estimates of water recovery shortfall of between 190 and 315 GL of the 605 GL
- Expecting some information on the Bridging the Gap recovery – 9.5 of the 39 GL Namoi this month from DCCEEW

NSW water Resource Plans (Red Flag)

Basin states were to develop water resource plans by 1 July 2019 to give effect to the long-term average sustainable diversion limits. Between January and June 2023, one further New South Wales water resource plan was accredited, bringing the total to 5 plans that have been accredited and are operational. Eight plans are with the MDBA and are undergoing formal assessment. The remaining 7 plans previously submitted for assessment were withdrawn by the New South Wales Government on 25 May 2023 and have not been re-submitted

Namoi WRP's

- Groundwater alluvium in assessment with MDBA with meeting requirement of the Basin Plan
- Surface water – Withdrawn from MDBA by NSW - working through some issues – time for resubmission not yet confirmed

Water Recovery

As at 31 May 2023, the MDBA estimates that the contracted (including registered) surface water recovery in the Murray–Darling Basin is 2,107.4 GL/y. Additionally, groundwater recovery in the Murray–Darling Basin is 35.2 GL/y. Recovery of an additional 3.2 GL/y is required in the Upper Condamine Alluvium, which has a target of 38.45 GL/y. Water recovery at the Basin scale remains at 98% for surface water and 92% for groundwater recovered against the Bridging the Gap target. • To progress the remaining Bridging the Gap water recovery, the Australian Government sought tender responses to purchase 44.3 GL/y. The tender closed on 19 May 2023

Expecting some information on the Bridging the Gap recovery – 9.5 of the 39 GL Namoi this month

What we are hearing

Basin communities in most regions support full implementation of the Basin Plan.

There are concerns about the use of water buybacks to address shortfalls in water recovery.

Delays in water recovery and the significant costs and time taken to recover water through infrastructure projects also continue to be raised as an ongoing issue

DCCEEW - What we heard Report (Ideas by submission for implementing the Basin Plan in full) moving forward

[What we heard: Delivering the Murray-Darling Basin Plan - DCCEEW](#)

DCCEEW ran a five-week public consultation process from 29 May to 3 July 2023 which gave stakeholders and the broader community an opportunity to submit ideas for delivering the Basin Plan.

Ideas submitted ranged from single statements to detailed proposals, with the following themes appearing consistently:

- a call for flexibility and a focus on outcomes
- a range of views on water recovery
- understanding social and economic outcomes
- preserving cultural heritage
- taking advantage of science, data and expertise.

What we will do next

In navigating a way forward on the Basin Plan, we will review ideas submitted in this consultation on their ability to:

- contribute towards the water recovery targets or achieve Basin Plan flow targets more efficiently
- secure value for money
- provide enduring environmental outcomes
- minimise socio-economic impacts
- provide other co-benefits (economic, social, environmental, cultural)
- be supported and implemented effectively within required timeframes by Basin state and territory governments.

What's coming up

- MDBA Community Forums – Border regions Friday – Get Involved
- Ag-Quip – next week
- World water week 20-24 Aug

Councillor Jamie Chaffey advised that he is a little concerned the consultation that is already underway about the 2026 version of the basin plan, as Mayor of Gunnedah or Chairperson of Region 11 didn't receive an invitation to have the opportunity to put a submission forward and wasn't even certain that it was happening. Councillor Chaffey will have a Chat to Annabelle about this.

Mr Mark Lamb advised that MDA have made a submission, which is available on the MDA Website if anyone requires a copy, we were complimented on Region 7 for the submission and the feedback has been very positive and this stems from the motions that have been received last year, trying to combine these and put that forward.

MDBA/DCCEEW - Update from Mr Greg Ringwood, DCCEEW – Local Engagement Officer, Northern Basin Section, based in Toowoomba *Note: that Ms Humphries was an apology for today's meeting,*

- Based in Toowoomba, LEO for Qld Rivers and Streams that go over the border
- Been involved in water management and water reform in the Murray Darling Basin for over 15 years
- Has spent last several years at the MDBA running the Fish Monitoring program
- The Northern Basin is a very large area and has a large number of team members that work on this and we work with over 25 nations of first nations people and thank them for their input into planning and delivery of water for the environment and acknowledge their links to the land.
- Ms Humphries has moved into a delivery officer role, is still involved in planning and delivery, but not so much in the engagement.
- Mr Ringwood may possibly attend future meetings, however if there are meetings more local to the Local Engagement Officer's they may attend in person, but still feel free to contact Mr Ringwood going forward.
- Councillor Chaffey asked regarding the forecasts we are hearing from the BOM that the next 12 months are going to be quite a challenge regarding rainfall. Mr Ringwood is hearing the same thing and they receive most of their advice from the BOM, the forecast is for a hotter and drier period that we are entering back into.
- Does that impact forward planning on water that is being held by the environmental water holder in our water storages, is there a 12 month forward plan on how it will be distributed through the river system. There is a plan that has been approved for each catchment which is on the MDBA website. We work within that environmental framework to deliver that water for the best outcomes that we can deliver.
- Presentation attached, for your perusal.

MDA Motions – Call for Motions to MDA National Conference

Mr Greg Ringwood left the meeting the time being 10.52am.

Mr Lamb advised that motions have been received from Region 6. Ideally have the motions by end of August so that we can take to the MDA Board, it's not the boards job to either accept or deny them, but to make sure that they are appropriate and take forward to the AGM.

REGION 11 MOTIONS

7.1 Recommendation from Gunnedah

1. That the MDA call upon the Federal Water Minister to engage a suitably qualified, third party to undertake a review of Basin Communities that will quantify the effect of the 2024 Basin Plan Water Recovery. This must include the social, economic and environmental impacts.
2. All consultation relating to Basin Plan 2 (2026) should be suspended until outcomes of the review are published.

***Moved Councillor Jamie Chaffey, Seconded Councillor Russell Webb
Carried***

7.2 Recommendation from Gunnedah

That the MDA call on the NSW Water Minister to amend legislation that will ensure protections are in place for Regional Water Utilities from privatisation, as recently resolved and legislation amended for Sydney Water and Hunter Water.

***Moved Councillor Jamie Chaffey, Seconded Councillor Greg Sauer
Carried***

7.3 Recommendation from Tamworth

That the MDA call on the NSW Government to commit further funding of \$250 million per annum for safe and secure water programs, in particular safe and secure water for critical human needs and food and fibre production.

***Moved Councillor Russell Webb, Seconded Councillor Greg Sauer
Carried***

Councillor Jamie Chaffey and Councillor Russell Webb will be attending the 79th MDA National Conference in Murray Bridge.

Councillor Greg Sauer advised that he is not attending the MDA Conference this year and wanted to remind that it is the End of Council term next September, the election is on 14 September, and that wherever the conference is held next year, it should be held no later than July, due to the September election and possibly won't have anyone that could attend if it is held in September, very important that we get the right month.

MDA Basin Plan – Basin Communities consultation

- Early Consultation apparently has already happened in several locations, have put this motion forward calling for the consultation to stop until there is a review of the current Basin Plan, hopefully this will be successful at Conference.
- Back up plan for Region 11 and members, and those considering on being members, if you have thoughts on the next version of the basin plan, send to Councillor Chaffey, we can put a submission together on behalf of Region 11, to those who are doing the consultation for the 2026 version of the basin plan.

Northern Basin Forum Postponed – call for suggested new forum date

- Would we still like to hold a Northern Basin Forum?. Due to lack of availability of politicians and other reasons, the forum was postponed, therefore now asking if we consider looking at another date or wait and see the outcome of Tamworth's submission to hold the 2024 MDA National Conference.
- Councillor Russell Webb supported to put this on hold to see who is successful to hold the next MDA National Conference, if successful Tamworth would be looking at holding the conference in or around July 2024.
- Ms Kate Dight – The Border Griffiths Council's group have also discussed to holding a water forum in conjunction with the RDA's for QLD and NSW, suggest a collaboration with BROCC for a potential water forum in Tamworth next year. It has been floated for 2024, which would line up perfectly with MDA Region 11.
- Being a Northern Basin, this takes in Region 12, 11, 10 – with which Ms Kate Dight is Chair of BROCC, 3 year term. BROCC is a 12 member Councils – Tenterfield to west, following the QLD Boarder.
- Councillor Greg Sauer also supported to hold over the forum until we find out about Tamworth's submission and Kate has come up with an alternative solution. The National Conference is due to come out to the Northern region as there has been a few down south in a row.
- Hold this items over to the next meeting, which is after the MDA National Conference – add to the next agenda

MDA Membership Drive – Verbal Report on tour of Eastern Boundary of Region 11

- Councillor Jamie Chaffey advised that Mr Mark Lamb discussed the membership drive earlier today, that he and Mr Mark Lamb undertook earlier this month. Thank you to everyone that assisted, particular Rob and Kate for their time. We were welcomed by all Councils that were visited, hopefully that will turn into interest in joining Region 11.
- The drive around the New England highlighted some of the bigger issues that are out there, the pressure on Local Government and our communities around water security. Hopefully this will turn into an increased in advocacy that comes out of the new England, and their understanding of this organisation and how we can unite to use our voice to push for change.
- Appreciation and thank you to Mr Mark Lamb for his time to come out to Region 11.

Tamworth Regional Council submission to hold the 2024 MDA National Conference

- Councillor Russell Webb believes as the largest centre in the northwest of the northern part of the basin, Tamworth is probably best suited to capture a good audience.
- Holding the annual conference in the northwest will encourage attendance from member councils and and hopefully new member Council's and others to join up with MDA Region 11 to get their voice heard.
- Highlight the needs for the north, we are all equal in the MDA, good opportunity for the north to be better represented in terms of membership and regions, what we are struggling with here in the north, we also hear what the struggles are in the south, but they don't hear what our challenges are here in the North.
- It would be a great opportunity for us to showcase what we have to offer and also what our challenges are with others from the MDA Regions.
- Councillor Jamie Chaffey advised that the reason why Gunnedah joined MDA Region 11 was to have another voice in the room and sharing the knowledge and experience of what is happening in our region. Gunnedah has shared in the pain of water restrictions that seem to always be there, because of a growing population, but out of that pain comes innovation as well, there has been so much work around water recycling and plans for the future. Learn from mistakes and positive outcomes, clearly educating the community on water use and responsibility. Broadly the knowledge that can be learnt from us, will provide a better understanding.
- Guidelines and feedback has been provided by MDA to TRC on how the submission should look, support from MDA has been provided eg templates, don't want anyone to reinvent the wheel. So far 1 other submission has been received from Griffith (Region 9). Mr Lamb does not have any voting rights, only the board can make the decision.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Murray Darling Association Region 11 support Tamworth Regional Council's submission to hold the 2024 Murray Darling Association National Conference to be held in Tamworth.

Moved Councillor Russell Webb, Seconded Councillor Greg Sauer

Unanimously Carried

2024 MDA National Conference – voting delegate

We need to formally nominate a voting delegate at the upcoming 2023 MDA National Conference in Murray Bridge. Councillor Greg Sauer nominated Councillor Russell Webb as the alternate voting delegate, Councillor Russell Webb accepted the nomination.

RECOMMENDATION:

Councillor Russell Webb was endorsed to be the alternate voting delegate at the 2023 MDA National Conference in Murray Bridge.

Moved Councillor Greg Sauer, seconded Councillor Jamie Chaffey

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next **Murray Darling Association Region 11 meeting** will be held on **Friday 10 November 2023 commencing at 1:30pm** and will be held in person and via Zoom for those who can only attend virtually.

Note: that the next BROOC meeting date has changed from Thursday 23 November 2023 dates to now being held on Friday 10 November 2023 in Tenterfield commencing at 9:00am to 1:00pm with Dinner on the Thursday evening.

MEETING CLOSED

The meeting closed, the time being 11:20am. Thank you to all members for their commitment to Region 11 MDA.