



Murray Darling Association Inc.

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ABN: 64 636 490 493

Minutes of meeting of Region 1 of the Murray Darling Association, held at the City of Wodonga Council Offices, Wodonga, Victoria, on Friday 21 February 2014, commencing at 10.00am

1. Attendance

1.1 Present

Mr Daryl Jacob OAM	Chairman Region 1
Cr George Martin	Tumbarumba Shire Council
Cr Sue Fletcher	Tumbarumba Shire Council
Cr David Thurley	Albury City Council
Mr Arch McLeish OAM	MDA member, Albury
Mr Bede Mecham	MDA Life Member, Wagga Wagga
Cr David Wortmann	Towong Shire Council
Mr Adrian Wells	MDA Manager Upper Catchment
Cr Fiona Schirmer	Corowa shire Council
Ms Helen Wilson	Murray Local Land Services, Albury
Mr Geoff Lucas	MDA member, Wodonga
Mr Bill McDonald OAM	MDA Member, Mullengandra
Cr Peter Croucher	Indigo Shire Council
Mr Mark Verbaken	Wodonga City Council
Mr Rob Angus	MDA member, Albury
Cr Rodney Wangman	Wodonga City Council

1.2 Apologies

Cr S Heriot Mr W Gorman, Cr D Chambers, Cr A Urquhart, Cr T Quinn, Ms S Ley MHR, Mr B Tilley MP, Mr G Aplin MP, Dr B Gawne

2. Welcome

2.1 Cr Rodney Wangman, Mayor, City of Wodonga, welcomed the meeting participants to the City of Wodonga. Cr Wangman then outlined recent developments and answered questions on the future growth of Wodonga. Cr Wangman made the following comments:

- the Association's issues and deliberations are important areas of interest for the council.
- it is a difficult time for state and federal funding to support water and irrigation, whether it be for irrigators, farmers, water authorities or city dwellers.
- New growth in Wodonga will focus on the removed railway lines with significant changes and expenditure but with anticipated significant investment and improvements ahead.

2.2.1 Chair, Mr Daryl Jacob, also welcomed members to the Region 1 meeting, thanked Cr Wangman for his words of welcome and thanked the City for arranging and hosting the Region 1 meeting. The chairman commented that the Upper Murray Farmers Alliance appears to be a lot happier in their relationship with Snowy Hydro and the work that Region 1 did to further the relationship and helping to address their erosion concerns.

3. Minutes

Moved D Thurley seconded G Lucas that the minutes of the meeting held at Holbrook on Friday 15 November, 2013 (circulated in late-2013) be taken as read and confirmed.

4. Business arising

5. Reports

5.1 Mr Daryl Jacob, Chairman, Region 1 - gave a verbal report

5.2 Mr Adrian Wells, Manager Upper Catchment – report was circulated

5.3 Cr Greg Toll, National President – report was circulated

Moved F Schirmer, seconded A McLeish that the reports be received.

6. Board

The MDA's Board met in Forbes on 14 February 2014. The chair gave a verbal and written report on the meeting. The socio-economic proposal was supported, providing that some Local Government General Managers and CEO's see the draft first and give us an idea of what might be involved in providing the base line information.

7. Honours for Dr Terry Hillman AM

Association Life Member, Dr Terry Hillman, was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the recent Australia Day honours. Dr Hillman has been a great supporter of the Association and the Association has worked with him and the Murray-Darling Freshwater Research Centre for many years.

Moved G Lucas seconded B McDonald that a letter of congratulations and thanks be forward to Dr Hillman.

8. Murray River Assets

Since the 2013 AGM, the Association has made submissions to the Murray-Darling Basin Authority and the states on joint state funding program to maintain Murray River assets. Correspondence indicates that the SA Government decision to cut funding is not final and full funding may be achieved. There are some indications that NSW may also reconsider its funding cuts.

9. Endangered listing halted

Following the 2013 National Conference, the Association wrote to Environment Minister Hunt regarding concerns that the US Humane Society wanted parts of the Murray and Darling rivers should be declared as endangered. The Association has since been informed that the bill pertaining to the "endangered listing of the Murray" from Wentworth to the Murray Mouth, has been withdrawn.

10. Renewed call for Bourke research centre

The Murray Darling Association has renewed its calls for a freshwater research station in Bourke. The Association wants a research centre built somewhere in the northern part of the basin to monitor water quality, and has identified Bourke as a potential location. With the implementation of the Basin Plan, there is a strong need for continuous auditing of the implementation of the Basin Plan and how it is affecting the various conditions of changes in water use.

11. NSW Local Land Services

As of 1 January 2014, CMA's in NSW have been replaced by a new Local Land Services. This is a new approach to delivering services, information and advice to farmers and land managers across NSW. Ms Helen Wilson, Team Leader, Murray Local Land Services in Albury, briefed the meeting on what is happening in the new Murray LLS. The meeting's concerns and challenges for the new organisation included:

- level of services to be delivered,
- funds allocated to staff versus on-ground works,
- loss of corporate knowledge with staff resigning or losing positions,
- repeal of the carbon tax may put in jeopardy three significant carbon storage projects started by the CMA,
- likely further changes and impact on staff levels, moral and services,
- weed control – who and what resources?
- border anomalies,
- partnerships with Victorian CMAs.

12. Managing rubbish in the City of Wodonga

Mr Mark Verbaken, Manager, Environment and Community Protection, with the City of Wodonga, made a presentation on the three-bin program to more effectively manage rubbish in the city's boundaries.

13. New Foundation program sponsor required

With the winding up of the Water For Rivers program, the Murray Darling Foundation needs to source a replacement for its very successful Murray-Darling Freshwater Research Centre Summer Scholarship Program. A Wells and B McDonald reported on their visit to discuss funding with Norske Skog. They will submit an application later this year.

14. 2014 National Conference

In November 2013, four councils in the Snowy Mountains area were sent letters inviting them to consider hosting the 2014 National Conference/AGM. The Region One chair, A Wells and the GM looked at the responses and recommended that Tumut Shire Council be given the opportunity. In early-January, a draft program was developed and discussed at the meeting. On 11 February, a meeting was held with the General Manager of Tumut Shire Council for some early planning. The outcome of the discussions were circulated.

The delegates were generally happy with the draft program. They made the following comments:

- Manus Winery would be suitable for partners tours lunch (and possible sponsorship).
- Hyne Timber Mill at Tumberumba may be a potential sponsor.
- Need costs for one-day only participants at conference.
- It is the 100th anniversary of the signing of the River Murray Agreement.
- Is it worth having a 'roving café' at the conference venue for good coffee?
- David Harriss, NSW Water Commissioner, is always a good speaker on NSW water issues.
- Need input from VIC Weekly Times and NSW Stock & Land.
- Need to alert Tumut restaurants to possible large influx of diners on the Tuesday and Wednesday nights.
- Can we get a dinner speaker who actually worked on the Snowy Scheme at the grass-roots level?

15. New history

The Association's Board has commissioned an up-dated history of the Murray Darling Association from 1944 to 2014 to help celebrate the organisations 70th anniversary this year.

16. MOU with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority

The Association recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority to clarify their roles and responsibilities. This MOU does not in any way impinge on the Associations autonomy and objectives and still allows it to disagree with any part of the Plan or any part of the Authority's policies and operations that might disadvantage the Association's Local Government members.

At the meeting, Chairman and MDA Board member, Darryl Jacob, circulated a written report on the Board meeting and showed the meeting Ken Roger's report.

It was pointed out that the Association had signed an MOU with the-then Murray-Darling Basin Commission some 14 years ago, and that this had resulted in a number of mutual benefits, including some significant financial benefits for the MDA over the years through delivering projects.

17. Murray Darling Foundation

A report was circulated.

18. Murray-Darling Freshwater Research Centre

A report was circulated.

19. Climate change forum

Given the recent extremes of weather, it has been suggested that the Region conduct a public forum later this year to discuss climate change the MDA Region 1 in conjunction with Charles Sturt University. The forum topic might be 'climate change - fact or fiction' with the aim of raising the level of public debate on this important issue. The forum would include experts in the field and maybe a panel of students debating the issues.

Moved G Lucas seconded R Angus that this forum be endorsed and that D Jacob be authorised to hold discussions with Dr M Finlayson of CSU regarding a draft program.

20. General Business

21. Next Meeting

This will be held in May 2014 on a date and at a venue to be determined.

22. Close

*The Murray Darling Association acknowledges and thanks
The City of Wodonga for arranging and hosting this meeting of Region One*