



# Murray Darling Association Inc.

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## Ordinary Meeting Region 2

MDA National Office, Moore Board Room 463-465 High Street, Echuca 3564  
Wednesday 29th March, 2017 at 9:30am for a 10:00am start

### MINUTES

#### 1. ATTENDANCE

##### 1.1 Present

Cr David Thurley	National President
Emma Bradbury	CEO MDA
Peter Harriott	CEO Greater Shepparton City Council
Cr Patterson	Greater Shepparton City Council
Margot Stork	GM Murray River Council
Cr Peter Mansfield	Moira Shire Council
Peter George	M & S Group Accounting – MDA incoming Treasurer
Ken Pattison	Individual Member
Cr Colin Jones	Berrigan Shire
Cr Ross Booty	Berrigan Shire
Rowan Perkins	GM Berrigan Shire
Sally Dye	Edward River Council CAC
Mark Francis CEO	CEO Murray River Tourism
Jenny Johnson	Individual Member
Colin Mues	MDBA
Siobhan Leslie	MDBA

##### 1.2 Apologies

Cr Ed Cox	Moira Shire
Mr Steve Crawcour	CEO Strathbogie Shire Council
Cr McClaren	Mayor Strathbogie Shire Council
Cr Bissett	Mayor Murrindindi Shire Council
Margaret Abbey	CEO Murrindindi Shire Council
Cr Rhonda Sanderson	Mayor Mitchell Shire Council
David Turnbull	CEO Mitchell Shire Council
Cr Dinny Adem	Mayor Greater Shepparton City Council
Cr Adrian Western	Mayor Campaspe Shire Council
Jason Russell	CEO Campaspe Shire Council
Cr Jennifer Anderson	Mayor Macendon Ranges Shire Council
Peter Johnson	CEO Macendon Ranges Shire Council
Rosemary Hancock	Municipal Association of Victoria
Cr Margaret O'Rourke	Mayor Bendigo City Council
Suzannah Sheed MP	Member for Shepparton

Lisa Chesters MP  
 Matt Hannon  
 Don Oberin

Member for Bendigo  
 Mayor Berrigan Shire Council  
 Life Member

### 1.3 Declaration of Interest

## 2. WELCOME

Chair Cr David Thurley National President welcomed all in attendance.

## 3. MINUTES

Motion: That the minutes of the last meeting of Region 2 held Friday 8th April, 2016 at Berrigan be accepted as a true and accurate record.

C Jones/S Dye

Carried

## 4. REPORTS

### 4.1 Chief Executive Officer's Report – tabled

Emma was asked to expand on any progress in prosecuting the case for local government to participate in Ministerial Council. Advised that the MDA along with several other regional local government groups has been invited to address the ministers at a roundtable of the Ministerial Council held in Mildura earlier this month. A copy of that address is attached.

Also discussed the decision by the board in developing the 2017 workplan to postpone the review of the MDA regional boundaries. This is an important body of work that will require a high level of engagement, collaboration, and participation by member councils to ensure regional alignments meet the needs of our members. Current resourcing, recent council amalgamations, and a sharp but still very recent increase in memberships all suggest that this work will benefit from being deferred for 12 months

### 4.2 Chairs Report

MDA 2017 Planning Workshop – attached

Board Meeting 363 Adelaide 15 February 2017 - attached

Region membership and income - attached

Motion: That the reports be accepted.

C Jones/M Stork

Carried

## 5. STRATEGIC PLANNING (standing Agenda item for 2017)

### 5.1 Murray-Darling LGA Regional Plans - Region 2

Murray-Darling LGA Regional Plans are being developed in all MDA regions across the Basin. The plans will reflect the profile and issues of the region from local government and community perspective. They are intended to be a communication tool to share information and develop shared understanding across and between regions, and to support and leverage advocacy works by and among community groups.

All member Councils invited to provide submission of issues paper. Non-member Councils invited and encouraged to join the MDA in order to ensure that the issues and priorities relevant to their communities are recognized, understood and included in the profile.

Issues mentioned in discussion included

- o Issues identified by Region 1 concerning the implementation of the Basin Plan - water access & reliability, Constraints Management, Flood communications, the management and operations of Hume Dam, the negative social and economic

- impacts and the need for Easter flows for tourism also apply to Region 2
- Development of a clear understanding of a number of negative environmental impacts of the Plan across the region.
- Concern regarding elements of the proposed release if the carp virus, including information sharing, costs, cleanup, impacts and unintended consequences.
- Overall volumes and take across the GMID and the region.

Councils undertook to develop a community profile and issues paper, and submit to the MDA for collation and formulation into a first draft for tabling at the next Region 2 meeting of the MDA. Papers from councils to be provided within 60 days.

## 6. STAKEHOLDER PRESENTATION:

*2017 Evaluation of the Basin Plan: MDBA's approach, local government's contribution*

Russell James	Executive Director, Policy and Planning
Colin Mues	Chief Economist MDBA

Following the presentation – copy attached, general discussion of the approach MDBA will be taking to this evaluation. MDBA keen to engage with local government through the MDBA region meetings to get a clear understanding of local issues and impacts, and to ensure they are 'asking the right questions'. MDBA will then be testing a number of propositions posited by analysis of ABS and census data. The timeline for the evaluation is very tight with the evaluation report due early in October.

## 7. GENERAL BUSINESS

7.1 2017 Workplan and priorities - Note report attached.

7.2 MDA Submissions – Amendments to the Basin Plan - Four submissions made in collaboration with member councils in various catchments. Note submission attached.

7.3 MDA ~~Ministerial Council~~ ~~is not~~ ~~the~~ ~~case~~ ~~that~~ ~~local~~ ~~government~~, as the third level of government in Australia, and the one most directly connected to people we serve, needs to be involves at the front end in the decision making processes relating to the Basin Plan.

7.4 2017 Murray Darling Association Conference 11 - 13 October 2017

Discussion focused on the importance of councils considering their motions to the conference to ensure that motions are well crafted, relevant, and implementable. Ideally, motions should be presented with appropriate background and supporting material, and be endorsed as position of the proposing member council – either by alignment to policy or by resolution of council. Motions should then be presented to the region meeting for endorsement by the region prior to inclusion in the national conference agenda. This means that councils need to start preparing now.

The importance of well-crafted and considered motions cannot be overstated. Motions to conference are a very public statement of the credibility, professionalism and culture of the organization and its members.

7.5 Chairing council/regional leadership – Region 2

Consideration of who will chair the region. Several new requirements and provisions for the chair to consider under the new constitution, including the need to demonstrate capacity to

resource the role, and effective regional leadership.

City of Greater Shepparton offered to engage in further conversation with the MDA in relation to the role.

#### **7.6 Media release from the MDBA advising River Murray flows variable in the lead up to Easter - 28 March 2017**

*Local communities and visitors to the River Murray downstream of Hume Dam and Yarrowonga during the Easter holidays are advised that flows and river heights will continue to vary through autumn.*

*MDBA head of River Operations David Dreverman said river conditions at this time of year were largely dependent on system conditions and how much water was ordered by entitlement holders.*

*"River levels this year from Hume to downstream of Yarrowonga have been lower than in recent years as demand further downstream has been mainly met by inter-valley transfers from the Goulburn and Murrumbidgee Rivers and by Menindee Lakes and Lake Victoria," Mr Dreverman said.*

*"The amount of water called at this time of year, by irrigators in particular, can fluctuate quite a bit as the weather in autumn is typically variable.*

*"If it is warm and dry, the demand for water can be high, so river levels rise as water is released from Hume Dam to meet demand. If there is rain, particularly in irrigation areas, demand lessens and river levels can drop. The shift from dry to wet conditions can happen quite suddenly, as has happened in recent years.*

*"The MDBA does not own water, so we are not in a position to maintain river heights that exceed those required to deliver current orders."*

*Mr Dreverman said it was too early to know how high flows would be at Easter but visitors, particularly downstream of Yarrowonga, should plan for the possibility of low river levels.*

*"The important thing to remember is that river levels might not be the same as the last time you visited the river. We recommend people remain aware of changing flows over the coming month.*

*"Those wishing to use the river for tourism and recreational boating should consider how they might adjust their activities should river heights be low. That includes making use of the many opportunities provided by weir pools on the Murray."*

*For more information on flows, river heights and salinity levels, river users are advised to subscribe to updates in the [River Murray weekly report](#) and refer to [livedata.mdba.gov.au](http://livedata.mdba.gov.au)*

Members discussed and highlighted the importance of reasonable and regular flows to support the economic stability of those communities that rely on river based tourism.

There have been several years, particularly those where Easter falls later in April, where the river has dropped sharply coinciding with Easter holidays, with a resultant loss in visitation numbers and a compromise of tourism product value. The economic cost to businesses and communities has been immediate and devastating, with longer running costs associated with rebuilding the brand also significant.

Concern that the media release indicates an inconsistency with the Water Act (Part 2, Div 1, subdiv B) that states that *the purpose of the Basin Plan is to provide for the integrated management of the Basin water resources in a way that promotes the objects of the Act by providing for inter alia (d) the use and management of the Basin water resources in a way that optimizes economic, social and environmental outcomes.*

Motion: That the MDA request an immediate opportunity to meet with the MDBA and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office to discuss the issues raised above, and to explore integrated and adaptive management strategies to deliver reliable flows that consider, recognize and accommodate the social and economic importance of the tourism sector to our Basin communities.

**8. NEXT MEETING TBA**

**9. CLOSE 12.00noon**