



Chief Executive Officer's Report

January 2022

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1. Introduction

I am delighted to submit my first official report to the Board for 2022. Whilst only some weeks into the role, I have ‘hit the ground running’ in order to get off to a good start. Obviously, there is so much to learn in any job, however, trying to understand the issues across the Murray Darling Basin is very challenging indeed! I would like to express my sincere thanks to all of you for making me feel so welcome.

2. Office

One of the first challenges I faced prior to Christmas was the impending end of lease of the Echuca office lease on December 16. Quick decisions were required, so we went about closing the ‘bricks and mortar’ presence in Echuca. This presented some challenges; however, we have dealt with most of the operational aspects of the office closure.

Going forward, Tim Philips will continue to work from Echuca from his home office.

I have already scoped the opportunities for an office located in Albury. The best potential solution is to be based in the Albury City Council Chambers. Currently, the Council is renovating the building, so don’t have a space ready to go at this stage. In the interim, there is an option to share space with RAMJO which is located on the 4th floor. I have already met with the EO who has agreed and is very willing for MDA to share their space.

3. Key Meetings and Engagements

Date	Event/meeting	Location
25/11/21	Channel 7 Interview	Albury
29/11/21	Meeting with The Hon Sussan Ley MP	Held Virtually
3/12/21	MDBA – Introduction to MDA CEO	Held Virtually
3/12/21	IGWC – Introduction to MDA CEO	Held Virtually
9/12/21	Max Finlayson – CSU	Yackandandah
9/12/21	Meeting with Hon Damian Drum MP	Shepparton
10/12/21	DPIE Water – Stakeholder Engagement Roundtable	Held Virtually
15/12/21	MRLGA Water Position Paper Inception Meeting	Held Virtually
5/01/22	Meeting with Murray River Council	Held Virtually
12/01/22	Brad Ferris – Deputy CEO AlburyCity Council	Albury
14/01/22	Nicola Gleeson – EO RAMJO	Albury
17/01/22	Meeting with Kevin Anderson – Minister Lands and Water	Deniliquin
19/01/22	Meeting with Terri Butler MP – Shadow Minister for Environment & Water	Held Virtually

4. 78th National Conference and AGM

On behalf of the team here, I am absolutely thrilled to officially launch the webpage and invite you to the **Murray Darling Association's 78th National Conference and AGM** to be held **19~21st September, 2022** in **Albury, NSW**. To register for the event, please visit the conference registration website [here](#).

The theme this year is “Economics, Dams & Infrastructure”. This exciting event will bring together leaders and decision makers from across the Murray-Darling Basin, and will be a wonderful opportunity to meet again, face to face.

The MDA’s 78th National Conference & AGM is **your opportunity** to be part of the solution – to join the conversation, to inform future policy, and to engage with the innovators, scientists, educators, and leaders of our time.

Join us in Albury, home to the winding Murray River and its waterways: home to the winding Murray, where local, technical and political leaders will come together to tackle the big issues of the Basin and forge a future of connected councils, catchments and communities.

The program for presenters and guest speakers is well underway and the Planning committee are working on all logistical matters to secure a whole Albury tourist experience.

5. Basin Community Leadership Program

The Basin Community Leadership Program (BCLP) will recommence Face to Face Workshops in a COVID-19-safe environment this March.

The details are as follows:

Recruitment is underway for these workshops with participants completing the MDA Academy Online Training prior to attending the face-to-Face workshops. The Online Academy covers five modules including: Leadership Theory; Water Literacy and Communicating with Impact.

The MDA will work in partnership with each of these towns to support the community, boost the local economy and encourage trade in small businesses with the remainder of the workshops to be rolled out across the rest of the year in the same format.

6. Engagement Report on the benefits of membership:

With over 167 councils in the MDB, the ongoing partnership between Councils and the Murray Darling Association elevates local and regional issues and priorities to the state and federal level providing national recognition of local priorities.

Membership to the MDA delivers social, economic, and environmental benefits to each community by creating partnerships, participating in events, and accessing networks and services that align with and support all Community plans, in the areas of Community, Environment, Economy and Council.

We know that councils and the local government sector are increasingly resource challenged and are looking for services, relationships and partnerships that assist in achieving your council's and your region's strategic priorities.

Water, land management, energy and community wellbeing are front and centre of almost every council's priorities. A strong relationship between council and the MDA provides opportunities to

- partner with councils and regional groups in providing local case studies and experience to support regional and national positions and advocacy strategies.
- raise the profile of your council and the local government sector through MDA's partnerships with the Commonwealth.
- present strategically aligned priorities, objectives, and advocacy to state and federal governments.
- leverage regional efficiencies and Basin-scale capability and positions.

Benefits to your community.

The MDA fosters a culture of community collaboration and leadership development to improve social, cultural, environmental, and economic well-being across the Murray-Darling Basin.

Working together with member councils and our regions, we achieve policy change and ensure local knowledge informs the national dialogue on water reform, land management, environmental sustainability, leadership development and education, and regional economic diversification.

Council's participation at MDA region and national meetings builds regional relationships and elevates the community's priorities to the state and federal level, informing decisions and outcomes that impact your local area.

Benefits to your environment.

There is no future on a dry riverbed. At the core of our vision is a strong emphasis on science and education to inform policies for the sustainable management of Basin resources to ensure a healthy and prosperous future.

The MDA's vision, which drives our strategic and operational direction, is for *local government and communities to work together to achieve a healthy, vibrant and thriving Murray-Darling Basin*. As a result, the MDA has:

- Partnered with CSIRO with a focus on science and education to address some of the Basin's toughest challenges.
- Advocated for and represented local government in environmental issues, including floodplain harvesting etc.
- Partnered with Murray-Darling Basin Authority, better supporting local government through information sharing and representation.
- Supported regions to develop Climate Ready Communities statements

Benefits to your economy.

For many, if not all, Basin communities, water security plays an important role in economic growth and sustainability. Through the MDA's regional alignments and partnerships, member councils leverage the value of knowledge sharing across the local government and regional development sectors to peruse water quality, water security and other priorities.

The MDA provides member councils with partnerships that support regional economic development and diversification initiatives.

Benefits to your council.

Our mission is to provide high value services to our members, and their communities by delivering quality projects, events and products create enduring value for Basin communities and governments.

Our achievements

The Murray Darling Association has been successful in shifting policies to better reflect the needs of the Basin communities, and we are continuing to grow our reach and impact as portrayed in our [Vision 2025 Strategic Plan](#).

The relationship between the MDA and our member Councils contributes strongly to the development of the local government sector as a whole and our collective role in ensuring a vibrant, sustainable future for the Murray-Darling Basin.

Mark D. Lamb

Chief Executive Officer