



## Chief Executive Officer's Report

August 2019

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## 1. Appointments

Date	Event/meeting	Location
30/07/2019	Connecting Catchments and Communities	Euston
31/07/2019	2020 National Conference discussion	Via Zoom
31/07/2019	Stronger Country Communities Funds	Webinar
01/08/2019	Claire Flanagan-Smith – RMCG – GMID Resilience Project	Echuca Office
02/08/2019	Craig Knowles - Austrade	Via Zoom
06/08/2019	CRM Discussions	Via Zoom
09/08/2019	Region 6 Ordinary Meeting	Via Zoom
09/08/2019	Region 11 Ordinary Meeting	Via Zoom
12/08/2019	City of Victor Harbor – Elected Member Briefing	Via Zoom
13/08/2019	Robbie Sefton – Panel Chair, SIA Conditions assessment	Teleconference
14/08/2019	LGNSW 2019 Water Management Conference discussion	Via Zoom
16/08/2019	Hon Minister McCormack	Wagga Wagga
19/08/2019	MAV – Cr Coral Ross, Rosemary Hancock and Kerry Thompson	Melbourne
21/08/2019	SEGRA – Managing Environmental Change in the Murray Darling Basin	Barooga
22/08/2019	Region 7 Ordinary Meeting	Via Zoom
23/08/2019	Region 1 Ordinary Meeting	Via Zoom

## 2. Engagements and events

### 2.1 Connecting Catchments and Communities

The second Connecting Catchments and Communities event was held in Euston on Tuesday 30 July, focusing on Constraints. The event was attended by business and community leaders from across the Basin. Technical experts including rural water broker Lewis Campbell, Almond Board of Australia CEO Ross Skinner and government agencies and departments provided a cross section of discrete perspectives on water demand, deliverability and environmental and economic sustainability.

The Murray Darling Basin Authority and the Commonwealth Environmental water Holder provided information on operational and ecological management strategies. A range of ecologists showed a system under critical pressure, while growth predictions presented by the almond industry and councils all combined to highlight the environmental, economic and social interconnectedness of our Basin regions.

Hearing from the ABA, communities and investors are excited by the economic opportunities presented by the growth in permanent plants. However, there is increasing recognition that relying solely on the market to supply water doesn't factor in the immense risks associated with total water availability and deliverability.

A key issue emerging from the discussion clearly illustrated that the crisis in the Darling River is placing immense pressure on the Murray River and its communities.

Outcomes from the day recognised the need for enhanced interagency collaboration as the tension between demand and deliverability increases.

This was one of the most technically wide ranging, thought provoking, possibly even confronting events we have facilitated. I am genuinely hopeful that this will be the beginning of a

conversation in which we are able to bring together leaders in water management, in water trade at community level to address the challenges of our system constraints.

As the Connecting Catchments and Communities (CCC) program evolves, the MDA is becoming more proactive in capturing and acting on its outcomes.

Identification of a range of the issues and challenges explored at the CCC is reflected in the Ministerial Council (MinCo) resolution on constraints, with Vic and NSW to do independent modelling.

The MDA wrote letters to all Ministers on MinCo incorporating some of the concerns raised at the CCC event.

The MDA continues to seek meetings and engage with relevant agencies and departments calling for more work to be done to ensure integrated planning and management of regional growth and water allocations and management.

Comms and Engagement Officer Jess Maher and Policy Officer James Marshal presented findings at the SEGRA conference in Barooga.

## **2.2 The Hon Minister Michael McCormack - Acting Prime Minister**

National President Cr David Thurley and I met with the Deputy Prime Minister The Hon Minister Michael McCormack in Wagga Wagga on Friday 16/08/2019.

The following items were discussed

- **MDA National Conference** - 22nd – 24 October 2019 in Toowoomba. Minister McCormack noted his interest in the program and in attending the event. Unfortunately, it is a parliamentary sitting week for the lower house, precluding him from doing so. Minister McCormack suggested that Minister McKenzie, Minister for Agriculture may be interested and that he will suggest to Ms McKenzie to consider the opportunity.
- **National Water Grid Authority taskforce** – Minister McCormack committed to providing a speaker to the National Conference from the Authority taskforce.
- **Municipal Engagement Officers** – The project proposal for the MCE funding was discussed. Minister McCormack acknowledged that the MDA was increasingly being relied upon by Basin governments and communities ‘to do more with less’ and encouraged the MDA to apply to Minister Littleproud for the funding and to write to him (Minister McCormack) separately also.

## **2.3 Municipal Association of Victoria – Monday 19 August, Melbourne.**

Meeting with MAV President Cr Coral Ross, Water Policy Officer Rosemary Hancock and CEO Kerry Thompson (apology).

Discussions included

- Response to the Independent Social and Economic Panel ToR. Concerns re governance, non-disclosure of interests, and consultation time frame.
- MDA National Conference 2019
- Opportunities for a closer working relationship between MAV and MDA incl possibility of an MOU for consideration

- Implementation of a CRM (Customer Relationships Management) system
- Membership growth and benefits

## **2.4 SEGRA (Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia) Annual Conference - Barooga**

On Monday 19<sup>th</sup> of August, Communications and Engagement Officer Jessica Maher and Policy Officer James Marshall presented at the Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia (SEGRA)'s Murray Darling Basin Forum in Barooga, New South Wales.

In a session exploring current actions addressing challenges in the Basin, the MDA presentation focussed on the Connecting Catchments and Communities program as inter-regional events aimed at enhancing water literacy and exchanging information between councils, communities and agencies across the Basin.

The audience included representatives from local government, Charles Sturt University, the Basin Socio Economic panel, MDBA and more, who were all very engaged in the presentation and asked a wide range of interesting questions. The audience was particularly interested in how we, at the MDA, engage with communities and facilitate events where community voices are heard.

The event highlighted that there is a great need for more Basin literacy and community engagement.

Managing Environmental Change in the Murray Darling Basin: implement best practice landscape scale planning and management

On Wednesday 21, the CEO attended the conference and presented as a panellist considering the topic: *Managing Environmental Change in the Murray Darling Basin: implementing best practice landscape scale planning and management*. The session was facilitated by Ashley Bland, Director, Constructive Energy & SEGRA National Steering Committee, with other panellists Peter Waterman, Adjunct Professor, Institute for Land, Water and Society (ILWS), Charles Sturt University and Dr Chris Yeats, Executive Director, Geological Survey of NSW, Department of Planning and Environment, NSW Government.

## **3 National Conference**

Opening address to be provided by Northern Basin Commissioner and A/Inspector-General for the Murray Darling Basin.

## **4 Reflecting Growth in Engagement**

Notable Increase to the MDA newsletter subscriptions.

- Thomas Carrigg from ACCC
- Richard Alcorn from Parliament of Australia
- Charles Everist from Victorian Farmers Federation
- Professor David Goldney from Western Australia

## 5 Correspondence Out

The Ministerial Council Meeting held in Canberra on Sunday 4 August was followed by factious media coverage and an unusual delay of some 3 ½ days in releasing the Communique, suggesting a possible return to division and disunity on the Basin Plan at Ministerial level.

[Murray-Darling Ministerial Council – 4 August 2019 Communique](#)

With the Council of Australian Governments due to meet on the following Friday, the CEO took the opportunity to write to all Basin government First Ministers, Water Ministers and their opposition counterparts, and Local Government Ministers to state our support for the united outcome and clear steps determined by the Ministerial Council, and urging all Basin Governments to set aside any disunity and stay the course, to work together to ensure the integrity of the Basin Plan is uncompromised and that its implementation is adaptive and timely, delivers a healthy working Basin for all.

[Please click here for a copy of that letter.](#)

We were pleased to note that we have received a positive response to many of the (individually addressed) letters and that at COAG, leaders from the Murray-Darling Basin reaffirmed their commitment to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and worked through next steps in its implementation. Further, Basin leaders agreed to a joint response to the Productivity Commission's Murray-Darling Basin Plan: Five-Year Assessment and endorsed the establishment of an Inspector-General of Murray-Darling Basin Water Resources, to improve transparency, accountability and community confidence in the delivery of the Basin Plan.

[Council of Australian Governments – 9 August 2019 Communique](#)

List of recipients

The Hon. Scott Morrison MP	Prime Minister
The Hon. Daniel Andrews MP	Premier, Victoria
The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian	Premier, New South Wales
The Hon. Steven Marshall MP	Premier, South Australia
The Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk	Premier, Queensland
Andrew Barr MLA	Chief Minister, ACT
The Hon. David Littleproud MP	Federal Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management
The Hon. Melinda Pavey MP	New South Wales Minister for Water, Property and Housing
The Hon. Dr Anthony Lynham MP	Queensland Minister for Natural resources, Mines and Energy

The Hon. David Speirs MP	South Australian Minister for Environment and Water
The Hon. Lisa Neville MP	Victorian Minister for Water
Ms Terri Butler MP	Federal Shadow Minister for Environment and Water
Clayton Barr MP	New South Wales Shadow Minister for Water
Dale Last MP	Queensland Shadow Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy
Dr Susan Close MP	South Australian Shadow Minister for Environment and Water
Steph Ryan MP	Victorian Shadow Minister for Water
The Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP	Federal Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Resources
The Hon. Mark Coulton MP	Federal Minister for Regional Services, Decentralisation, and Local Government
The Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe MP	Queensland Minister for Local Government
The Hon. Shelley Elizabeth Hancock	NSW Minister for Local Government
The Hon. Adem Somyurek MP	Victorian Minister for Local Government
The Hon. Stephan Knoll MP	South Australian Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Local Government

## 6 Membership

20208	31/07/2019	Post	Coolamon Shire Council	Declining Membership
20209	31/07/2019	Post	Whyalla city council	Declining Membership
20210	31/07/2019	email	City of Adelaide	Declining Membership
20211	5/08/2019	Post	Glen Innes Severn Council	Declining Membership
20212	12/08/2019	Post	Bogan Shire Council	Declining Membership
20213	20/08/2019	Post	Copper Coast Council	Declining Membership
20214	20/08/2019	Post	City of Greater Bendigo	Declining Membership
20216	20/08/2019	Post	City of Marion	Declining Membership
20217	15/08/2019	Phone	Hindmarsh Shire	Membership Enquiry
20218	20/08/2019	Email	South Burnett RC	Declining Membership

Membership engagement continues to present a challenge for the association. Discussions with our Victorian state counterparts MAV identified several shared challenges, with some discussion on strategies to quantify and communicate member benefits.

## 7 Projects

### ***MDA Basin Communities Leadership Program***

Preparations for exchange of contracts with the Department of Agriculture continue. All information and documentation have been provided by the MDA and approved by the Department.

## 8 Organisational development

**Business update:** The MDA strategic plan 2016-19 set a goal of becoming a strong, viable, self-sustaining organisation. Since the strategic planning workshop earlier this year, the board have committed to invest in the association's resources and capability (388-4.3) to achieve this goal and to deliver on our purpose overall.

In March/April, I have drafted an internal [Organization and Human Resource Plan 2020](#) to guide the development of the team. It should be noted that the plan is and must remain adaptive to respond to the evolving needs of the business as they emerge.

Since April this year, we have recruited to three new positions. These positions are

- Communication and Engagement Officer
- Policy Officer and
- Executive Assistant.

All positions are currently part time. The incumbent personnel are Jess, James and Cathy respectively. All three continue to make a tremendous contribution to development of the organisation in a seemingly chaotic environment of rapid and dynamic change both the internally to the business, and externally in response to a busy Basin environment.

We are currently recruiting for a further two positions

- Leadership Training Coordinator, and
- Grants and Submissions Writer

We are also currently working with a local NDIS provider and social enterprise support officer to provide an employment opportunity for a higher-needs employee.

I have negotiated an increase on our existing lease to now occupy half of the first level of the building we are in – taking in 4 offices, a storeroom and a collaboration hub, at a very modest increase to the original cost of the 2 office lease. We have installed desks, phones and data points to accommodate up to a total of 10 personnel, which is adequate to accommodate our projected growth over the coming 12 months at lease. Option for further expansion is built in if required. Additional costs of expansion now will be limited to wages and the desktop computers, at approx. \$2k per station commissioned only upon appointment of personnel.

All MDA personnel, archives and assets are now located on the one premises, realising a saving of approximately \$2500 per year.

These changes are both operational and incremental, often seeming too inconsequential to report on a month to month basis. However, when considered together the development of the MDA as a business is in an exciting, and clearly strategic period of growth.

It should be noted that the current growth and development of the MDA is absent external grants, funding or projects.

Please [click here to see a photo-board](#) of the current MDA office space.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emma Bradbury', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Emma Bradbury**

**Chief Executive Officer**