



Chief Executive Officer's Report

January 2019

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1. Appointments

Date	Event/meeting	Location
17/12/2018	Board Meeting 382	Echuca (ph)
20/12/2018	Region 4 local strategic planning discussion	Buronga (ph)
20/12/2018	MDA Christmas breakup – PV, DoJ	Moama
08/01/2019	Health of the Barwon-Darling – regional LG collaboration	Bourke (ph)
11/01/2019	EMFM Radio – monthly program	Echuca/Moama
14/01/2019	National Carp Control Plan	Canberra (v)
23/01/2019	Inter-govt interagency meeting – Health of the Barwon-Darling	Sydney
23/01/2019	Peak groups Skype briefing	Canberra (ph)
24/01/2019	Northern Basin Commissioner – Mick Keelty	
24/01/2019	Rachel Connell – NSW Dept Industry - Water	Sydney (v)
29/01/2019	Productivity Commission SWG Briefing	Canberra (v)
29/01/2019	Murray River Council – GM	Echuca

2. Engagements

2.1 Health of the Barwon-Darling – regional LG collaboration

At a meeting on Tuesday 08/01/2019 of local government leadership including the CEO of the MDA and the Mayors and representatives of Wentworth, Brewarrina, Bourke, Central Darling Shires and Broken Hill City Council it was determined that local government will urgently seek a collaborative meeting with the New South Wales Minister for Regional Water Hon. Niall Blair along with representatives from his department and from the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, the MDBA, and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office.

The objective of the meeting will be to look for both short-term and long-term strategies to improve the health of the Barwon-Darling River system.

2.2 National Carp Control Plan

Following the resignation of Matt Barwick in late 2019, Jamie Allnutt has been appointed Co-Ordinator of the National Carp Control Plan.

Discussions with Jamie affirms that the NCCP values ongoing local government engagement to assist development of a plan for the control of carp in Australia.

In addition to current participation of the MDA within the NCCP Communications Working Group, the NCCP would like to progress the following additional measures to enable increased local government engagement in the NCCP:

1. Inclusion of a Local Government nominee (appointed in consultation with the MDA) to the NCCP Operations Working Group (OWG), to assist in strategic and operational planning for possible virus release and clean-up activities, and ultimately, development of the NCCP Operational Plan; and,
2. Collaboration to deliver a Local Government-led case study, to facilitate information sharing, inform future planning and ensure preparedness.

To ensure efficiency, the NCCP suggest that the chosen Local Government representative also leads the case study in their area.

To assist in considering appropriate membership for the NCCP OWG, we would be seeking input of an individual with:

1. Understanding and interest in the NCCP and carp control;
2. Experience and expertise in the development and management of Emergency Management Planning processes;
3. Operational experience related to the management of waterbodies and water quality;
4. Knowledge or ability to access information relevant to environmental planning, transport and disposal of organic waste, waterbody operations, water treatment policy, legislation and regulations.
5. Knowledge and experience in pest species management or planning

The NCCP expects that the Local Government representative will participate in at least three meetings in Canberra and numerous teleconferences. The NCCP is willing to negotiate travel expenses for the chosen representative, if required.

The NCCP suggest that the Murray river region contains Local Governments that might be suitable candidates for involvement as discussed. These Local Government areas include Albury, Wodonga, and local government areas further east.

The NCCP understands that you is seeking a recommendation from the MDA of a suitable Local Government area. The NCCP looks forward to engaging with a chosen Local Government as soon as possible.

2.3 Inter-govt interagency meeting – Health of the Barwon-Darling

Following the meeting on Tuesday 08/01 of local government leadership including the Mayors and representatives of Wentworth, Brewarrina, Bourke, Central Darling Shires and Broken Hill City Council, the MDA and mentioned councils met with representatives from the office NSW Minister for Regional Water Hon. Niall Blair along with representatives from his department and from the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, the MDBA, and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office, the Northern Basin Commissions and the Commissioner for Land and Water. The MDA played a lead role in convening the meeting on behalf of members and stakeholders. Agenda and attendance list attached.

The objective of the meeting was to look for both short-term and long-term strategies to improve the health of the Barwon-Darling River system.

This was widely regarded as an exceptionally constructive meeting.

Key issues facing those councils impacted by current conditions in the Barwon-Darling were identified as follows

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| Bourke Shire Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imminent threat to town water supply with access to river supply likely to be depleted by March 2019. Completion of works to supplement the existing bore supply is a matter of urgency. • Immediate need for an extraordinary flow in the Barwon Darling to replenish the weir pool, and that will reach Wilcannia. • Longer term solutions including increased and additional storages, revision of planning for environmental flows, and re-evaluation of stalled initiatives such as diversion of the Clarence River. • Escalation of the Safe and Secure Water Supply Scheme |
| Central Darling Shire Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water treatment plants – aging assets unable to cope with current demand. • Increasing demand for water – with current recommended allocation of 140 litres per person per day inadequate in heat stressed conditions. • Deteriorating levels of wellbeing and mental health throughout the shire. |
| Brewarrina Shire Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embargo on pumping in the Gwydir and Macquarie Rivers for 1 month to allow approx. 30GL to flush the system. • Aeration of Brewarrina and all major Weir Pools. • Suspension of the implementation of Flood Plain harvesting pending a review of the impacts of flood flow diversions and on-farm storages. • Reinstate pump size limits n A Class Licences and suspend the transfer of A class licences away from the property of original allocation. Reversal of unbundling. |
| Shire of Walgett | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of water in the Barwon and Namoi Rivers • Increase capacity for storage and delivery. • Deteriorating levels of wellbeing and mental health throughout the shire. |

Three key themes emerge across all submissions, calling for

- Adaptation and review of existing rules and processes.
- Investment in storages and supply capacity.
- Recognition of severe adverse social impact and community wellbeing.

2.4 Peak groups Skype briefing

Briefing to peak bodies on the
Extent of current situation in Menindee, including

- Current actions on fish kills
- Future actions and whole of government response

MDBA Presentations

- The role of MDBA operations
- Menindee Lakes inflows and the drought

2.5 Northern Basin Commissioner – Mick Keelty

As part of a wider package of initiatives to support implementation of the Murray–Darling Basin Plan, the Australian Government, last year appointed Mr Mick Keelty, AO APM, as the independent Northern Basin Commissioner, for a three-year term. Mr Keelty commenced in the role of Commissioner on 11 September 2018.

I met with Mr Keelty, and executive officer Alyssa Bagley via phone for a wide ranging and informative discussion identifying areas of common interest on issues such as consistency of telemetry, nomenclature and water allocation processes and governance across the basin. Mr Keelty expressed an interest in engaging further with the MDA, and has accepted an invitation to provide an address at the 2019 National Conference.

2.6 Rachel Connell – NSW Dept Industry – Water

Following the 2018 National Conference in Leeton, the MDA and the NSW DPI – Water have established a regular, bi-monthly meeting.

Discussions with Rachel Connell, Mitchell Isaacs and Ashraf El-Sherbini were productive, focusing on the need for education and public engagement and participation.

The MDA has sought funding from NSW DPI Water for funding to develop and deliver an agreed community consultation standard. Ms Connell has affirmed that NSW DPI Water will engage with the MDA, and provide funding to enhance community consultation standards and engagement on Basin issues through local government.

The NSW DPI-Water staff will provide a proposal to the MDA in the coming days for further discussion.

2.7 Productivity Commission SWG Briefing

The Productivity Commission’s Murray-Darling Basin Plan: Five-year assessment Inquiry report was sent to Government on 19 December 2018 and publicly released on 25 January 2019, after the draft was first presented to the public at the MDA’s 74th National AGM in Leeton on 2018 Na.

The report makes findings on progress to date in implementing the Basin Plan and recommendations on actions required to ensure effective achievement of Basin Plan outcomes. Most of the recommendations involve incremental improvements to the current arrangements.

Others are to provide the strong foundations needed for the Plan to succeed — sound governance, good planning, and effective and adaptive management.

As a member of the SWG since the commencement of the review in December 2017, I am pleased with the contribution to this work made by all stakeholder representatives on behalf of their respective constituencies. I commend the report for your consideration, and for distribution across your regional networks. A full copy of the report and further details can be found [here](#).

2.8 Murray River Council – GM

Meeting with Murray River Council General Manager Des Bilske discussed a number of economic activation initiatives for the Wakool, Toolybuc and Moulamein areas in the Murray River Council and up into the Balranald area. Initiatives discussed include the growth in up to 7,000 jobs by 2030 supported by the activation of large areas of permanent plantings.

3 Update on AGM Resolutions

Little progress on any resolutions across the Christmas, early new year period.

4 National Conference

Regular planning meetings of the National Conference planning committee will resume in February.

5 Administration

Scott Bourne concluded his tenure with the MDA on 31 December 2019. Planning for a new org structure and required positions has commenced, with the strategic planning workshop to consider methods of funding.

After more than 4 years of being co-located with Parks Victoria at 461 High Street Echuca, the MDA in December 2018 moved to premises at 250 Anstruther Street. PV concluded it's lease on the building after a departmental determination was made to locate their depot and offices in the same building. The MDA thanks PV for a wonderful relationship across the

6 Projects

Connecting Catchments and Communities – MDA inter-regional workshops

MDA Regions 4-5 will be holding a workshop/forum in Renmark on the 22nd February 2019 10.00am to 4.00pm.

The target audience is MDA councils from R4-5-6-7-8 (Barwon-Darling and all SA Regions), with the purpose to facilitate further education and information on the topic of river health and connectivity from Menindee to the Coorong. The forum is titled ***Murray Darling Association – Connecting Catchments and Communities: Menindee to The Mouth.***

This will be the first in an ongoing series of events that the MDA will run titled ***Connecting Catchments and Communities.*** The workshops will be presented as inter-regional events, aimed at enhancing water literacy and exchanging information across the Basin.

Topics for the coming year include:

- **Albury to Adelaide** - exploring topics of inflows and urban water use, planning, flood management etc.
- **Balonne to Broken Hill** – exploring topics of irrigation in the Northern Basin, Barwon-Darling water sharing plan etc
- **Moira to Mildura** – exploring issues of constraints, management of the Barmah choke, impact of expanding the irrigation footprint to permanent plantings below The Choke, total capacity and supply obligations etc.
- **Naran Lake to Nyngan** – Managing the Macquarie Marshes – exploring the relationship between the irrigation, the SDLs and ephemeral wetlands of the interior.
- Etc...

In consultation with the Chairs of R4-5, I have invited a range of presenters to speak at this inaugural event, and have also invited stakeholder organisations to consider sponsoring, or contributing funding to the ongoing delivery of the series.



Emma Bradbury

Chief Executive Officer