



## Chief Executive Officer's Report

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### 1. Introduction

In addition to ‘business as usual’ issues, we have been focusing on key deliverables, including:

- Membership
- Executing, reporting, and finalising CSIRO ‘Circular Economy’ projects
- Preparing, organising, and delivering MDA conference and AGM
- Working on financials
- Following up on previous motions and preparing motions for the AGM
- Advocacy

### 2. Membership

The Murray Darling Association is continuing to drive membership wherever possible and have conducted engagement and membership campaigns with current non-member Councils and Non-Local Government Entities whenever the opportunity allows. Recently, the MDA engaged in meetings with Local Government Areas in Region 7. Feedback has been very positive, with a number of Mayors and Chief Executives indicating that they would consider re-joining the Association. We also received similar feedback from Queensland Councils after the MDA’s presentation to the recent Council of Mayors meeting.

The Murray Darling Association is planning to conduct similar engagements and visits with Local Government Areas in its other regions.

### **3. Advocacy**

The Murray Darling Association has continued to connect with related parties in the water space, both Federally and State based.

Of particular note, the Federal Minister for the Environment and Water, Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, spoke at our 78<sup>th</sup> National Conference, and there has been ongoing communication following. The MDA has had follow up calls and had very good discussions about many subjects, including MinCo and recurrent funding for the MDA as well as water buybacks.

The Minister very much enjoyed being at the MDA conference and enjoyed meeting many of our members from across the Basin. Minister Plibersek has indicated that her door is open to us and looks forward to further engagement such as through the Water Reform Taskforce and MinCo.

The Murray Darling Association has received much media attention following the 78<sup>th</sup> National Conference, as well as leading up to its 79<sup>th</sup> National Conference in September 2023. With this continuing, the MDA aims to capitalise where appropriate.

A number of speaking opportunities have ensued, with the MDA engaging with, and presenting at the Water Symposium and the SW Qld Council of Mayors.

The Murray Darling Association has also been approached to partake in the Department for Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water's (DCCEEW) "Delivering the Murray-Darling Basin Plan" workshop, and has been invited to provide feedback and recommendations to the Department on how to achieve the delivery of the Basin Plan. To this effect, the MDA engaged with its members, and has submitted its feedback report outlining 21 Recommendations to deliver the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

This Feedback report has also garnered interest from the Murray-Darling Basin Authority.

We are continuing to develop relationships with State Ministers and relevant bodies, and we are currently seeking face to face meetings to further the Association's advocacy goals.

### **4. Partnerships, collaboration, and engagement**

We are continuing to work on a range of partnerships such as CSIRO, SQNNSW and One Basin CRC. Whilst the CSIRO relationship has already provided outcomes, other partnerships are a slower burn. However, feedback has been very positive in terms of the potential of these relationships.

## 5. CSIRO and the Circular Economy

CSIRO Land and Water has partnered with MDA to investigate and explore a series of strategic growth areas that align with the biggest land and water challenges faced by Australian governments/agencies, industries, and communities. These growth areas will build on capabilities and that of our partners and transform the boundaries of the types of products, research projects and services we might collaborate on.

They have identified Repurposing Waste / Circular Economy as a strategic growth area and we are interested in validating this with LGA's as a valued partner. We would like to understand more about how LGA's work within the repurposing waste / circular economy area within their organisation.

***“The MDA had achieved in 3 months what would have taken CSIRO years.”***

They are also keen to hear about any future aspirations they might have in regard to infrastructure solutions they need now and into the future. To capture these insights. We completed a series of meetings in May and June that will help inform the future of this growth area and ensure they can design solutions that are of value for all.

Having successfully completed all requirement and presented to the management of CSIRO, they indicated that they were very pleased with our work, stating that “the MDA had achieved in 3 months what would have taken CSIRO years.” We have developed good working relationships with most of their departments – in particular, the Land and Water Division. Given the interest around managed aquifer recharge, there is potential to partner with CSIRO again re this area of work.

We have engaged with CSIRO on a further project, which is an extension of the previous Circular Economy work. There is the potential to conduct further work with CSIRO departments which we are continuing to explore.

In addition to the above projects, we are providing consultancy to an organisation that is working in the Circular Economy.

## 6. Key Meetings and Engagements

Date	Event/meeting	Location
31/5/23	Meeting with Hon Kristy McBain MP	Canberra, ACT
2/6/2023	Meeting with PSTR Group	Albury, NSW
6/6/2023	One Basin CRC June Partner Briefing	Held Virtually
8/6/2023	Co-design 3.1: Alternative water – initial workshop	Held Virtually
9/6/2023	Darling Downs and Southwest Queensland Council of Mayors' Meeting	Attended Virtually
9/6/2023	Meeting with the CSIRO: Circular Economy	Held Virtually
13/6/2023	One Basin CRC June Partner Briefing	Held Virtually
14/6/2023	MDBA River Reflections Conference	Attended Virtually
15/6/2023	MDBA River Reflections Conference	Attended Virtually
20/6/2023	Meeting with A/g CEO David Waters – Adelaide Hills Council	Sterling, SA
20/6/2023	Meeting with Burnside City Council	City of Burnside, SA
20/6/2023	Meeting with Mitcham City Council	City of Mitcham, SA
21/6/2023	Meeting with A/g CEO Bruce Williams	City of Charles Sturt, SA
21/6/2023	Presentation to Biochar Conference	Attended Virtually
22/6/2023	Productivity Commission's first MDB Plan inquiry working group meeting	Held Virtually
22/6/2023	Co-design 3.1: Alternative water – workshop 02	Held Virtually
23/6/2023	Delivering the Murray-Darling Basin Plan Workshop: Local Government	Held Virtually
6/7/2023	One Basin CRC July Partner Briefing	Held Virtually
11/7/2023	Meeting with NSWIC Claire Miller	Telephone
12/7/2023	Meeting with Joanne Chong – Productivity Commission	Held Virtually
13/7/2023	One Basin CRC July Partner Briefing	Held Virtually
13/7/2023	Meeting with the SA DEW – Co-design 3.1: Alternative Water	Held Virtually
19/7/2023	Water Engagement Roundup, July 2023	Held Virtually
25/7/2023	Meeting with Tamworth Regional Council	Tamworth, NSW
25/7/2023	Meeting with Uralla Shire Council	Uralla, NSW
25/7/2023	Meeting with Armidale Regional Council	Armidale, NSW
25/7/2023	Meeting with Glen Innes Severn Council	Glen Innes Severn, NSW
26/7/2023	Meeting with Tenterfield	Tenterfield, NSW
26/7/2023	Meeting with Inverell Shire Council	Inverell, NSW
26/7/2023	Meeting with Moree Plains Shire Council	Moree Plains, NSW
26/7/2023	Meeting with Narrabri Shire Council	Narrabri, NSW
2/8/2023 - 3/8/2023	One Basin CRC Annual Conference	Albury, NSW

## 7. 79<sup>th</sup> National Conference and AGM

The Murray Darling Association will be hosting its [79<sup>th</sup> National Conference](#) at The Rural City of Murray Bridge, SA, on **27<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> September 2023**, featuring an incredible lineup of speakers, including the Federal Minister for the Environment and Water, the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Basin Experts, Water Users, Irrigation, and Industry heads, as well as Shadow Water Minister Senator Perin Davey and Murray-Darling Basin Authority CEO, Andrew McConville.

***This year's theme is "Partnership through collaboration across the Basin."***

The 79<sup>th</sup> National Conference will bring together heads of Industry, Irrigation, Local Government, State Government, and Education to discuss ***Partnership through collaboration across the Basin***, and will explore many themes such as Natural Disaster Recovery, Water Security, The Circular Economy, Preparing for Drought and Water scarcity, and Climate Change.

The event on **27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> September** will provide an unrivalled platform to unite all corners of the Murray-Darling Basin's communities at a national level, guiding advocacy, representation, and engagement priorities and initiatives through the Murray Darling Association, the peak body organisation representing and advocating for the needs and interests of over 164 Local Government Areas across the Basin.

Supporting the National Conference, the Murray Darling Association is hosting a number of social events, such as the **Welcome Reception**, welcoming Delegates to Murray bridge, the **Gala Dinner**, providing a quality networking environment, **Exhibition opportunities**, offering incredible engagement opportunities between Businesses, Departments, Local Government, and attending Delegates, as well as a **Study Tour**, departing from the Murray Bridge Town Hall, circumnavigating the Coorong and the Lower Lakes and across the Barrages.

Recognising the importance, and influence, of Local Government, Businesses, and that of community leaders and representatives, the Murray Darling Association invites you to consider attendance to the 79<sup>th</sup> National Conference, to **collaborate, and be a part of the Basin's water solution** – to join the conversation, inform future policy, and to engage with the scientists, educators, and leaders of our time.

**Join the conversation!** Join us and engage with local, technical, and political leaders to forge a future for councils, catchments, and communities.

**Inform future policy!** Engage with the innovators, scientists, educators, and leaders of our time to tackle the big issues of the Basin.

**Engage and network!** Engage with peers and experts over dinner and discuss technical issues with industry and department heads at our Conference exhibition booths.

**Collaborate, and be a part of the Basin's water solution! Register Now!**

Find out more, and to register, go to [www.mda.asn.au/events/2023natcon](http://www.mda.asn.au/events/2023natcon).

**Early bird tickets available until 31 July 2023**

## 8. Engagement Report on the benefits of membership:

We are embarking on a membership drive, in order to try to secure new members as well as retain our current membership. In particular, we want to ensure that the Northern Basin is engaged. We are pleased to update the Board with the news that Tamworth Regional Council has rejoined, and we are working towards engaging with Tamworth, as well as other councils considering membership in the near future.

With over 167 councils in the Murray-Darling Basin, 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 priority. 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

Murray Darling Association Inc.