



Chief Executive Officer's Report

November 2023

Mark Lamb
m.lamb@mda.asn.au

Contents

| | |
|--|---|
| 1. Introduction | 2 |
| 2. Membership | 2 |
| 3. Advocacy | 3 |
| 4. Partnerships, collaboration, and engagement | 4 |
| 5. CSIRO and the Circular Economy | 4 |
| 6. Key Meetings and Engagements | 5 |
| 7. 80th National Conference and AGM | 6 |
| 8. Engagement Report on the benefits of membership: | 7 |

1. Introduction

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

- Membership
- Executing, reporting, and finalising ‘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
- Ongoing advocacy

2. Membership

We are continuing to drive membership wherever possible and have conducted several membership campaigns to non-members. However, membership of a council usually results from formal face to face meetings and follow up.

The MDA strives to meet with non-members whenever the opportunity allows. Recently, we had meetings with LGA’s in Region 11 and 7 and the feedback was very positive and resulted in several councils joining, with more to come. We also received similar feedback from Queensland Councils after the recent Council of Mayors meeting. An ongoing Membership engagement mission is planned for all of the Basin Regions.

3. Advocacy

We have 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 the 79th National Conference and engaged with our and there has been ongoing communication following.

Exploring Partnership through collaboration across the Basin, the MDA's 79th National Conference brought together both MDA member and non-member councils to engage in conversation, network with innovators, scientists, educators, and technical and political leaders of our time.

At our 2023 Annual General Meeting, Members discussed and reviewed over 20 Motions, forming the foundations of the MDA's leadership and advocacy work for the years ahead.

Taking the advocacy in stride, the MDA has already engaged with Australia's Federal Government regarding a number of these Motions, and we are looking for further engagement opportunities with Federal, and State Ministers in the year ahead!

During the National Conference, the MDA Board had the incredible opportunity to engage with the Federal Minister for the Environment and Water, Hon Tanya Plibersek MP over a round table discussion, kicking off further planned engagement sessions with Local Government, First Nations, Irrigators, and Water Users.

Topics discussed included: SDLAM project completion, timeframes, and updates, State Government 450GL frameworks, the Water Amendment Bill 2023, Identifying Constraints, impact of water availability on Industries, Infrastructure projects in the Basin, the MDBA Basin Plan Roadmap, Water Security and Community viability across the Basin.

The Minister very much enjoyed being at the MDA conference and enjoyed meeting many of our members from across the Basin. Of particular note, Minister Plibersek noted that face to face engagements with the MDA, such as the Conference round table discussions, were incredibly valuable, beneficial and would help inform Government decisions regarding legislation and policy. A follow-up engagement session with the DCCEEW resulted in the MDA attending a DCCEEW workshop approaching Peak body entities across the Basin, reflecting on current legislation and the needs of the Basin.

We are continuing to develop relationships with State Ministers and relevant bodies and we are currently seeking face to face meetings with relevant minister to further this year's, and past year's, Motions and Actions.

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 as will be mentioned further in this report, 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.

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

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

To capture these insights, the MDA has completed a series of meetings that will build towards, and help inform the future of this growth area and ensure the CSIRO can design solutions that are of value for all. We have now successfully completed all requirements of the initial engagement with Local Government Areas and presented our findings to the management of CSIRO.

The MDA's work was very well received by the CSIRO, stating that “the MDA had achieved in 3 months what would have taken CSIRO years. We have developed , and continue to develop, a good working relationship 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 regarding this area of work.

Building upon the success of our past work with the CSIRO, the MDA has been engaged with regarding a further project in the Circular Economy field, extending upon the previous work completed in 2022. This project is being developed as we speak, and the MDA is excited to see it to its fruition, with a meeting planned with CSIRO and the Greater Shepparton City Council in November, to further understanding Circular Economy opportunities in local government.

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 |
|-----------------------|---|-------------------|
| 9/8/2023 | Meeting with Inverell Shire Council | Held Virtually |
| 15/8/2023 | NSW Department of Planning and Environment – Targeted consultation session – Non-urban metering review – Local Government | Held Virtually |
| 18/8/2023 | CSIRO: Panel briefing (Innovation for Impact Summit – Securing Australia’s Environmental Panel) | Held Virtually |
| 24/8/2023 | Productivity Commission’s second MDB Plan inquiry working group | Held Virtually |
| 29/8/2023 | CSIRO: Innovation for Impact Summit | Brisbane QLD |
| 31/8/2023 | Interview: Outback Radio | Held Virtually |
| 4/9/2023 | Meeting with SNSW Drought and Innovation Hub (function and opportunities) | Held Virtually |
| 11/9/2023 | Meeting with Margot Rawsthorne – University of Sydney | Held Virtually |
| 12/9/2023 | One Basin CRC Parter Briefing – September | Held Virtually |
| 13/9/2023 | Victorian Flood Enquiry | Mooroopna VIC |
| 20/9/2023 | Water Engagement Roundup – September | Held Virtually |
| 21/9/2023 | CSIRO Meeting: Climate Risks to Regional and Remote Communities | Held Virtually |
| 21/9/2023 | Murrumbidgee Plan review – stakeholder consultation | Held Virtually |
| 25/9/2023 - 28/9/2023 | MDA 2023 National Conference | Murray Bridge, SA |
| 27/9/2023 | Roundtable meeting with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hon Tanya Plibersek MP • DCCEEW • MDBA | Murray Bridge, SA |
| 10/10/2023 | Presentation to the Swan Hill Rural City Council | Held Virtually |
| 15/10/2023 | Presentation to the DDSWQCoM | Held Virtually |
| 17/10/2023 | Meeting with the DCCEEW: Next Steps, advice/approach upcoming workshops | Held Virtually |
| 18/10/2023 | Water Engagement Roundup – October | Held Virtually |
| 24/10/2023 | Presentation to the Murray River Council | Moama NSW |
| 31/10/2023 | One Basin CRC Partner Briefing Update – October | Held Virtually |
| 2/11/2023 | Productivity Commission’s final MDB Plan inquiry working group meeting | Held Virtually |

7. 80th National Conference and AGM

The feedback from our National conference has been very positive. We were able to secure the key speakers we wanted as well as relevant sponsors. The number of delegates was in excess of 150. Overall, we were very pleased with the result. In addition, we made a positive contribution to our financial position.

Looking forward, I am pleased to officially launch the webpage and invite you to the ***Murray Darling Association's 80th National Conference and AGM*** to be held ***23~25th July, 2024*** in ***Tamworth, NSW***, exploring "The future of Water Security".

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.

Tamworth is a thriving regional city and is the heart of the New England region. It's a destination for family fun, outdoor adventure, foodie delights, the arts and heritage, plus so much more!

Renowned for its laid-back lifestyle, incredible landscapes and generous hospitality, Tamworth is where rich heritage meets outdoor adventure, arts and culture complement luxury, and sports intersect action and fun!

The MDA is engaging with the 2024 host, Tamworth Regional Council to prepare an incredible event and networking opportunities for its members, with Guest speaker schedules already being prepared. Acknowledging the importance of State and Federal Government engagement at our Conferences, the MDA has already reached out to State and Federal Water and Environment Ministers, as well as their Shadow Minister counterparts!

The MDA encourages all member, and non-member councils to consider your attendance, to join the conversation, to inform future policy, and to engage with the innovators, scientists, educators, and leaders of our time and be a part of the solution to the management of Basin resources!

Join us in Tamworth, where local, technical, and political leaders will come together to tackle the big issues of the Basin and forge a future for councils, catchments, and communities.

8. Engagement Report on the benefits of membership:

The MDA has been embarking on a membership drive, in order to try to secure new members as well as retain our current membership.

A keen focus has been identified in the Northern Basin, where we want to ensure that the Northern Basin is engaged to its fullest potential. We are pleased to note that our engagement with Councils and entities across the Basin bearing fruit! We are delighted to welcome Moree Plains Shire Council, and note an uptake of individual membership, as well as welcome our latest member Aither Pty Ltd.

Following ongoing engagement with Councils across Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia, the Murray Darling Association has received great interest in membership from Inverell Shire Council, Narrabri Shire Council, Swan Hill Rural City Council, and Murray River Council. Further engagement and follow up meetings are planned.

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.



Chief Executive Officer
Murray Darling Association Inc.
[0490 143 214](tel:0490143214)
m.lamb@mda.asn.au