

MLDRIN News

Quarterly news update from
the Murray Lower Darling
Rivers Indigenous Nations

Winter, 2015



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Strengthening Connections

This NAIDOC week, MLDRIN Chair Darren Perry joined Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations (NBAN) Chair Fred Hooper and Murray Darling Basin Authority CEO Rhondda Dickson to launch the *Strengthening Connections* document. *Strengthening Connections* is the MDBA's first reconciliation action plan. MLDRIN looks forward to building on our important relationship with the MDBA, guided by this plan in 2015. <http://www.mldrin.org.au/strengthening-connections/>

Visit to Jinchilla

The MLDRIN Board was lucky enough to be shown around this property on the Macquarie River, during a recent Meeting in Dubbo. Wiradjuri Elder and MLDRIN Board Member Coral Peckham outlined the community's aspirations to manage and care for this very significant place. Part of MLDRIN's work involves engaging with First Nations to support their plans and priorities. See the pic above.



MLDRIN hits the news!

In the last few months MLDRIN has received coverage on SBS Living Black, The Koori Mail and more. Find us on facebook and twitter for details:

www.facebook.com/mldrin , @MLDRIN



Water Resource Planning Workshop

Ngarrindjeri Country, Goolwa, 25th-26th June 2015

MLDRIN held a Full Delegation meeting and Water Resource Planning workshop on Ngarrindjeri country, in Goolwa, SA on the 25th and 26th June. This special meeting was held to assess and build capacity for Nation's involvement in Water Resource Planning. With assistance from independent legal experts Environmental Justice Australia, delegates discussed opportunities and challenges for Nations'

engaging with State Governments as they identify Indigenous values, uses, objectives and outcomes related to water management in the Basin.

The workshop included a 'knowledge stock take' of current capacity, a presentation and information session delivered by Environmental Justice Australia and independent water lawyer, Bec Nelson, followed by discussions in State groups.

Feedback from delegates will be incorporated into a report and distributed to all participants as well as other stakeholders. MLDRIN is pursuing opportunities to conduct more workshops and forums at a regional level across the Basin.

If you have questions about the workshops or Water Resource Planning please contact our EO at info@mldr.org.au or 0404 163 700.

Recognising the Elders

Our Elders have provided direction and inspiration to help MLDRIN work for the interests of its member nations. At the recent Goolwa meeting, we took steps to acknowledge the contribution of the Elders past and present with an award. A beautiful trophy produced by Wathaurong Glass, an Aboriginal-owned company

from Geelong VIC, was presented to Grant Rigney to honor his father Matt Rigney's tireless work for MLDRIN. Every year we will formally recognise another Elder for their work, with all names being engraved on the trophy. The award ceremony was held at a dinner attended by all delegates and a number of MDBA staff.



What have we been up to?

MLDRIN delegates and staff have been out and about engaging with key partners and working on country across the Southern Murray Darling Basin.



Basin Water Buy-Back Cap in Parliament

In May, the Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment Bob Baldwin introduced a Bill to cap buy-backs of water for the environment in the Murray Darling Basin at 1500 gigalitres. Buying water from willing sellers, under the Restoring the Balance program, has been the primary way the Federal Government meets its targets of returning water to the river systems of the Basin. The Water Amendment Bill 2015 would limit purchases of water, instead requiring governments to source water from infrastructure upgrades and efficiencies.

MLDRIN has two main concerns about the Bill 1) it significantly increases the cost of water recovery (it's about three times more expensive to save water with infrastructure rather than to buy it) making it more difficult to see the Basin Plan implemented in full and 2) Rolling out a large scale infrastructure program across the Basin could impact on

cultural heritage and TOs ability to care for country. The Bill has been referred to an Inquiry.

MLDRIN made a submission to the inquiry and released a media statement which received coverage on SBS Radio, The National Indigenous Radio Service and the Koori Mail. For more info and to read MLDRIN's media release visit:

<http://www.mldrin.org.au/traditional-owners-speak-out-on-water-buy-back-cap/>

Basin Plan Inquiry

Speaking of Inquiries, a number of cross-bench senators have managed to mount a Senate Select Committee Inquiry into the Basin Plan this June, backed by irrigators angry about the impact of the Plan. The Inquiry will look into the social and economic impacts of Plan's implementation, especially water-buybacks for the environment. Irrigators claim that water buybacks are destroying communities and, somewhat surprisingly, hurting the environment. MLDRIN is engaging with the members of the

Inquiry and other stakeholders to present the perspective of the Basin's 75,000+ Indigenous population. This is an important time for Traditional Owners to be heard, and we encourage everyone to inform themselves and engage with their local Senators and MPs on this issue. Terms of Reference for the Inquiry



and other information can be found at: <http://goo.gl/EBXbHz>

Irrigator's conference

In May, MLDRIN Chair Darren Perry attended the 2015 Irrigation Australia (IA) conference in Western Sydney. IA is Australia's peak national organisation representing the irrigation industry, and a powerful stakeholder on water issues.

Continued

Darren presented on the issue of Cultural Flows, along with Deakin University Professor Sue Jackson and Neil Ward of the MDBA. MLDRIN is reaching out to stakeholders across the Basin to ensure the word about cultural flows is heard in all corners.

Aboriginal Waterways Assessment tool

MLDRIN representatives are closely involved in the ongoing development of the Aboriginal Waterways Assessment (AWA) tool. The AWA is a tool allowing Traditional Owners to assess and quantify the cultural health of waterways on their country. In June MLDRIN representatives attended a joint meeting in Wagga Wagga to discuss the progress of the tool. In July, MLDRIN and NBAN delegates agreed on a name change from the Aboriginal Cultural Flows Health Indicator

(ACFHI) to the AWA to better reflect the purpose of the tool. MLDRIN has also provided advice on the future roll-out of the AWA and reviewed a report regarding trials of the tool held earlier in the year.

MLDRIN has been involved in the development of the tool since 2013 when reps traveled to New Zealand/Aotearoa to study the Cultural Health Index developed by the Maori community. MLDRIN is committed to see that the tool is used appropriately and effectively to benefit First Nations.

Water Quality Guidelines

The MLDRIN Board has provided feedback for a chapter on Cultural and Spiritual Values to be included in the Australia/New Zealand Guidelines for Water Quality. The new chapter sets out ways that water managers can

take Indigenous values into account in water quality management. We hope the new chapter will provide a useful 'hook' to push for improved outcomes for Basin waterways.

A Web of Water Rights

In May, MLDRIN reps attended a seminar presented by Dr Virginia Marshall, a Wiradjhuri-Nyemba woman and lawyer who recently completed her PhD thesis entitled 'A Web of Aboriginal Water Rights'. The MDBA hosted the seminar which calls for a new paradigm of water rights based on human rights. Read the thesis here: <http://goo.gl/dZ812u>



International Rivers Symposium

Four MLDRIN delegates will attend the annual International Rivers symposium in Brisbane this September 21-24th to highlight the importance of water entitlements for Aboriginal economic development. The theme for this year's conference is "Healthy Rivers - Healthy Economies". The Symposium offers an opportunity to ensure that Traditional Owner voices are part of the discussion about how river systems should be managed for social well-being.

Floodplain Management Strategy

The Victorian Government has released a revised draft Flood Plain management strategy. The revised strategy recognizes the cultural significance of floodplains to Aboriginal people. It also calls for engagement with Traditional Owners in the development of Regional Flood plain management strategies. The strategy and other information can be viewed at: <http://goo.gl/PjBsFz>

Women's Leadership Summit 2015

Held on the 25th-27th August in Sydney the 2015 Indigenous Women's Leadership conference will explore key strategies for female indigenous leaders across all sectors to accomplish personal and community goals and maximise opportunities for career advancement. There will be workshops on personal resilience and spiritual and emotional wellbeing for Indigenous women. For more info visit: <http://goo.gl/Hb91Xk>



Busting the Basin Myths

Environment Victoria campaigner Juliet LeFeuvre has produced this punchy response to some key myths being circulated about the Basin Plan. Well worth a read

<http://goo.gl/avZCJZ>



Ringabalin set to roll again

This September, The Ringabalin River Country Spirit Ceremony will journey down the length of the Darling River to the mouth of the Murray. Ringabalin is a Ngarrindjeri word meaning gathering of the tribes. Led by Ngarrindjeri Elder Major Sumner, this powerful ceremony unites many Nations across the Basin to heal the river country. For amazing picture and videos from the 2013 ceremony visit

<http://www.ringabalin-riverstories.com>

SDL Adjustment and Traditional Owners

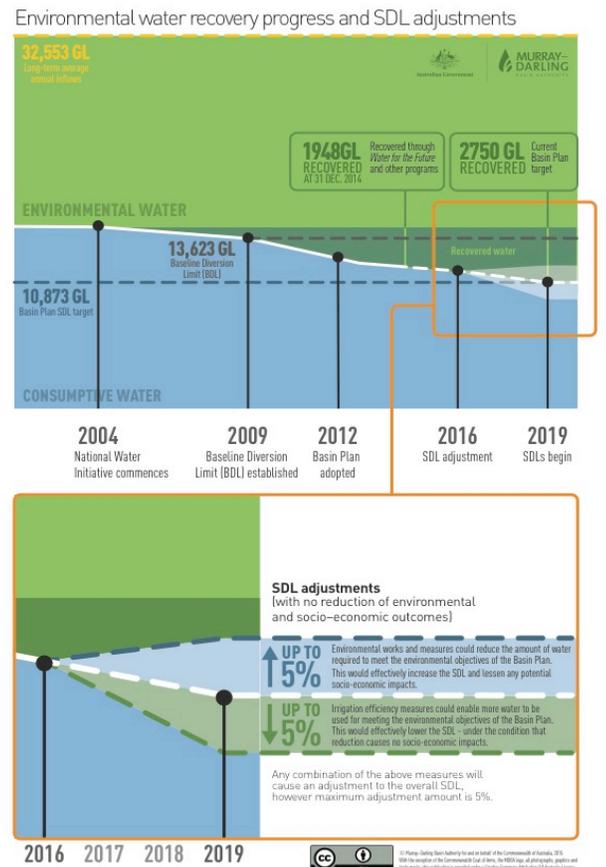
You might have heard the term ‘SDL Adjustment’ thrown around a lot lately when people discuss the Basin Plan. So what is the SDL Adjustment and what does it mean for Traditional Owners?

SDL stands for Sustainable Diversion Limit: this is the amount of water that can be taken out of the Basin’s rivers for consumptive use (irrigation, town water supplies, industry) while sustaining ecosystems along the river. The Murray Darling Basin Authority has set the SDL at 10,873 gigalitres (GL) per year. This means that 2750 GL has to be returned to the river through water buy backs and other mechanisms, to support the environment. Here’s the catch: under the Basin Plan, an ‘SDL Adjustment Mechanism’ has been included. It allows less water to be put back into the river for the environment as long as the ‘same’ environmental outcomes are achieved, by using ‘supply measures’. It also allows more water to go back to the environment, if water-saving ‘efficiency measures’ mean farms can use less water, with a neutral socio economic outcome (see diagram to the right).

A key concern of MLDRIN is the impact that these Supply Measures could have on cultural heritage and the integrity of important cultural landscapes. Most of the supply measures proposed to-date are environmental works and measures that involve constructing infrastructure (regulators, levies etc) to

hold water in wetlands and forests for longer. Building this infrastructure entails a significant impact on country. Disturbance of cultural heritage sites is a real possibility. The other concern is that the scoring mechanism used to decide whether environmental outcomes are being met involves considerable ‘trade-offs’. Some areas will get more water, but others will get less. Different parts of country will be impacted in different ways. MLDRIN Delegates attended a MDBA peak bodies meeting on the SDL Adjustments in June and raised some of these concerns with the MDBA. We hope to organize a dedicated briefing with key MDA staff in the very near future.

We will continue to provide information and updates to all member nations. For more info on SDL proposals visit: <http://goo.gl/a5GvD0>





Help MLDRIN speak as a strong, united voice for Sovereign First Nations

Since 1998 MLDRIN has worked to ensure that the voices of Sovereign First Nations from the Southern Murray Darling Basin are heard loud and clear. We need your support to hold Governments to account and achieve big wins for our people. Eligible First Nations who do not currently have Delegates attending MLDRIN meetings are warmly invited to apply. Please email executiveofficer.mldrin@gmail.com for more info

"The land, water, air and people recognised as one holistic landscape, protected and sustained by our sovereign peoples"



Maraura

Waywurru

Tatti Tatti

Barapa Barapa

Taungurung

Barkindji

Wamba Wamba

Nari Nari

Wadi Wadi

Wegi Wegi

Yita Yita

Yorta Yorta

Ngarrindjeri

Nyeri Nyeri

Mutthi Mutthi

Dja Dja Wurrung

Wiradjuri

Ngintait

Latji Latji

Wergaia

Wolgalu

Dhuduroa

Yaitmathang

Wotjabaluk