



Meeting Update

Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations

Meeting Details: MLDRIN, Board Meeting
Date: 21 st and 22 nd February 2019
Venue: Demo Club, Broken Hill NSW – Barkandji Country

Attendance
<p>Delegates: Peter Ingram (Wiradjuri), Alice Williams (Wolgalu), Stewart Taylor (Wamba Wamba), Jida Gulpilil (Dhudhuroa), Kingsley Abdulla (Maraura), Rene Woods, (Nari Nari), Brendan Kennedy (Tati Tati), Grant Rigney (Ngarrindjeri), Will Mooney (Executive Officer), Kaleana Reyland (Projects and Engagement Officer)</p> <p>Agency staff: Tony McCleod, Neville Crossman, Ken Scott, Brione Craven, Janet Pritchard, Marcus Finn (MDBA), Bec Harris, Brie Papps (CEWO), Rhonda Butcher (Consultant), Vincent Van Uitregt (SA DEW).</p>

Key issues discussed:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Board discussed recent major fish kill incidents, causes and responses. Chair Rene Woods reported on meetings with the Barkandji Native Title Board and Murray Darling Basin Authority, NSW Water Minister Niall Blair, NSW Department of Industry Executive Director. The upcoming Murray Lower Darling and Barwon-Darling Water Resource Plans are a critical opportunity to address the causes of the fish-kills and protect cultural values along the Baarka and other waterways.• MDBA staff provided updates on fish kill threats and conditions in key rivers. Environmental water held in the Murrumbidgee has been able to mitigate risks. Low water holdings in the Darling, drought and climate change are ongoing threats. There is a need for 'real time' Traditional Owner input into water delivery decisions.• South Australian Royal Commission's recommendations include important improvements to legislation and policy that recognises Aboriginal water rights. It is critical to advance these recommendations• Water Resource Plans (WRPs): states are seeking extensions to submitting water resource plans (2 months for most but up to 10 months for NSW). Directors received an updated timeline for submissions of WRPs and highlighted challenges associated with rapid assessment of WRPs by MLDRIN. In March MLDRIN will start formal assessment of five WRPs from Victoria, South Australia and NSW. There is a need to consider the implementation of WRPs and how to maintain momentum on Aboriginal engagement after WRPs are in place.• Directors heard from MDBA staff regarding the development of framework for evaluating the impact of the Basin Plan on Aboriginal people and cultural values. By end of 2020 MDBA have to complete an evaluation report. Directors highlighted the need for Traditional Owner-led evaluation approach to gather data and assess outcomes. The Board established a sub-committee to engage with Member Nations and the MDBA on further development and to consider: what are the evaluation questions and how do we collect the data to address those questions?• Directors reviewed a discussion paper received from Department of Agriculture and

Water Resources (DAWR) regarding the delivery of \$40M of funding earmarked for acquisition of water for First Nations cultural and economic purposes. Paper indicates Indigenous Land and Sea Council (formally ILC) could manage funding. MLDRIN reps will meet with DAWR and others on Tuesday 26th to discuss the proposals.

- Brendan Kennedy reported on attendance at the [Water is Life Gathering](#) in Canberra 12-14th February. Directors discussed opportunity for a strategic alliance with Seed Indigenous Youth Climate Network.
- Directors discussed a workplan and arrangements for delivery of Cultural Flows projects led by a new Cultural Flows project officer
- Directors discussed MLDRIN involvement in the review of the [Basin Wide Watering Strategy](#). MLDRIN will begin to draft text regarding Aboriginal watering objectives for the updated strategy. A more thorough review of the strategy will take place in 2022.
- Directors heard an update from SA Water Policy Officer Billy Van Uitregt. Billy outlined ongoing development of WRPs in SA and informal policy commitments guiding recognition of Aboriginal Water Interests.
- Directors received information about how cultural science can be recognised and included in the new Basin Science Platform program, a set of guidance on how science, knowledge and innovations can be best developed, coordinated and used to support the Basin Plan and its implementation.

Key resolutions and decisions:

- The Board reviewed applications for membership from Bangerang Traditional Owners and referred the applications to the MLDRIN Full Gathering for review and ratification.
- The Board reviewed an application for Membership from Ngurai Illum Wurrung and decided to request additional information from the applicant before a referral to the full delegation.
- The Board reviewed and adopted a Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure and appointed a Complaints Handling Subcommittee. The Board reviewed and adopted a Roles and Responsibilities of Directors Policy.
- The Board established a sub-committee to engage with Member Nations and the MDBA on further development of evaluation of Basin Plan impacts on Aboriginal People
- The Board established portfolios to better share growing workload and engagement with states and other stakeholders
- The Board endorsed a preferred candidate for the position of First Nations Water Officer (Cultural Flows).

Key upcoming dates

- 3rd March 2019: [Day of Action in support of Aboriginal communities](#) facing fish kills and water shortage, led by NSW Aboriginal Land Council
- 31st March 2019: Public Submissions due for [review of Barwon-Darling Water Sharing Plan](#)
- 11th and 12th April 2019: Next MLDRIN Full Gathering: 11-12th April 2019, Canberra

If you have any questions about anything raised in this update please feel free to contact Will Mooney on **0404 163 700** or email: executiveofficer.mldrin@gmail.com