



## Meeting Update

### Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations

<b>Meeting Details:</b> MLDRIN Board Meeting
<b>Date:</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> June 2020
<b>Venue:</b> Videoconference via Zoom

#### Attendance

MLDRIN Directors: Kingsley Abdulla (Maraura), Grant Rigney (Ngarrindjeri), Brendan Kennedy (Tati Tati), Stewart Taylor (Wamba Wamba), Alice Williams (Wolgalu), Rene Woods (Nari Nari) Day 2 only, Will Mooney (Executive Officer).

Apologies: Melissa Jones (Latji Latji)

Absent: Jida Gulpilil (Dhudhuroa), Peter Ingram (Wiradjuri)

#### Agency Staff:

- MDBA: Tony McLeod, Ken Scott, Mark Foreman, Susan Goff, Sam Roseby, Ian Krebs, Chris Leavings, Ken Scott, Amy Southwell .
- NSW DPIE: Paula D'Santos
- DELWP: Briony Gryce, Kirsty Savage, Paulo Lay
- CEWO: Bryony Papps

#### Key issues discussed:

- Directors discussed MLDRIN's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and agreed to keep current restrictions in place. These include supporting all staff to work from home, no travel for MLDRIN staff and delegates and no face-to-face workshops hosted by MLDRIN. Directors agreed that current restrictions should stay in place through till the end of July at a minimum. In special circumstances the Board may consider supporting travel and face to face workshops, so long as an appropriate risk assessment and health and safety measures are implemented.
- The Board considered the poor attendance record of some Directors and the risks associated with non-attendance, including difficulties achieving quorum. The Board reiterated the importance of Directors attending all meetings and keeping up to date with MLDRIN activities, in order to fulfil their duties as

Directors of the Company.

- The Executive Officer provided a report updating on implementation of the [MLDRIN Strategic Plan](#).
- MLDRIN staff provided updates on key programs including the Cultural Flows Program, Water Access for Economic Development and Environmental Watering Priorities
- Representatives for the [One Basin Cooperative Research Centre \(CRC\)](#) proposal provided a briefing on the proposal and opportunities for First Nations organisations to participate. The CRC is a major collaboration including five universities and industry partners to conduct research and provide education and training to address major risks to Basin communities (including climate change, land-use change, water management issues). MLDRIN Directors raised questions about how the program of research and training could advance First Nations interests. Directors agreed to consider opportunities for involvement in the CRC.
- Associate Professor Steve Hemming, from [UTS Jumbunna Institute for Institute for Indigenous Education & Research](#) presented to the Board regarding opportunities for partnerships and project collaboration with MLDRIN. Options include a formal partnership advancing Nation Building activities, as well as collaboration on application of culturally informed risk assessment processes. Directors expressed strong support for progressing collaboration and agreed to further discussions with UTS Jumbunna representatives.
- The Board was informed of organisational and staff changes within MDBA. There still has not been any announcement on the appointment of an Indigenous Member to the Authority Board.
- Directors and MDBA staff discussed the [review of the Basin Plan in 2025](#) and the development of a revised Basin Plan. Directors discussed options for collaboration with NBAN, MDBA (including the soon-to-be-appointed Indigenous Board Member), and the [Basin Community Committee](#) on a strategic approach to Basin Plan review. MDBA staff recognised the need for MLDRN and Nations' capacity to be strengthened to support involvement in the Basin Plan review.
- Directors discussed progress of the \$40M [Aboriginal Water Entitlements Program](#). Recent discussions between ILSC and the Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment (DAWE). The final design for delivery of the program has not been determined but MLDRIN Directors understand there is still a potential for the funding to support development of a First Nations water trust or other collaborative governance arrangement.
- MDBA staff provided an update on the review of the Basin Plan Environmental Watering Plan (Chapter 8). The degree to which First Nations' objectives are

reflected in the chapter is one of the two primary issues that the review has considered. Recommendations from the review have now been circulated and are included as an attachment to this meeting update. MDBA staff also reflected on the success of the First Nations Environmental Water Guidance (FNEWG) project and conceded the MLDRIN Board's concerns that the final [2020-21 Basin Annual Environmental Watering priorities](#) document may not reflect input from First Nations as strongly as possible. These issues will hopefully be addressed through next years' FNEWG project.

- MDBA provided an update on the progress of NSW Water Resource Plans (WRPs). MDBA must provide advice to the Commonwealth Minister on whether NSW WRPs should be accredited under the Water Act 2007. MLDRIN has a formal role to review WRPs to determine if requirements for First Nations consultation have been met.
- MDBA staff provided an update on the [2020 Evaluation of the Basin Plan](#). The social and economic outcomes component of the evaluation has been looking into how Basin Plan reforms are impacting on social and economic outcomes for First Nations people in the Basin. MDBA staff outlined the process for reviewing and releasing a draft report on the findings and outlined some initial results of data analysis.
- Commonwealth Environmental Water Office (CEWO) staff provided an update on the development of a CEWO First Nations Engagement Strategy. The strategy has been on hold for some months and, when prepared, will guide more coordinated engagement with First Nations. Briony Pappas (CEWO) committed to provide an initial draft of the Strategy with MLDRIN in the near future.
- NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) Environment, Energy and Science (EES) division staff provided an update on a new Prioritisation Framework for environmental water planning. The framework included six criterion to help determine where environmental water should be delivered. A new 'cultural values' criterion has been included: to consider whether there is 'active community involvement/access at the site' and whether watering 'protects known Aboriginal cultural heritage values'. EES concedes that the initial criteria are quite crude and there is a lack of baseline data and sought input from MLDRIN on refining these
- Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) staff provided an update on staffing arrangement, including announcing the appointment of a new Manager of the Aboriginal Water Unit, Kirsty Savage. DELWP staff also advised on a delay to the State Budget (likely to October or November), meaning that anticipated multi-year funding arrangement or Aboriginal Water Officer staff will not be able to finalised. However, DELWP have been able to secure an extension of AWO positions for a further 12-

month period.

### Key resolutions and decisions:

- The Board agreed to write to Directors with a poor attendance record to ask them to resign from their Board positions to allow additional opportunities for Delegate's involvement on the Board. MLDRIN Policies will also be amended to clarify that the Board will ask the members to vote to remove any Director who does not attend three consecutive meetings, or 75% of meetings within a year.
- Directors agreed to consider the benefits and risks of participation in the One Basin CRC Proposal, to inform a review and decision by the Full Delegation
- Directors agreed to continue more detailed discussions regarding opportunities for a partnership with University of Technology Sydney (UTS) Jumbunna Institute. Directors agreed to consider more immediate options for collaborating with UTS Jumbunna on projects, including application of a First Nations' led risk assessment methodology.
- The Executive Office and Board members Brendan Kennedy and Kingsley Abdulla agreed to provide a briefing to NSW DPIE EES on the Aboriginal Waterways Assessment tool and discuss options for improving the environmental water delivery prioritisation framework
- Directors agreed to continue reviewing a draft CEWO First Nations Engagement Strategy
- Directors reviewed and approved:
  - Minutes of the previous Board meeting (27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> February 2020 and 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020)
  - The correspondence register, including incoming and outgoing correspondence
  - Finance reports including an updated annual budget, profit and loss statements and the balance sheet

### Key upcoming dates

- 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> July: Assessment workshop for the NSW Lachlan Groundwater Water Resource Plan (the first of seven assessments to be conducted by MLDRIN).
- 27<sup>th</sup> July: Feedback on the Basin Plan Environmental Watering Plan review draft findings and recommendations due
- 21<sup>st</sup> August 2020: Submissions due on the [Productivity Commission National Water Reform Inquiry discussion paper](#)

- Watch this space: NSW Regional Water Strategies (RWS) for the Lachlan and Macquarie Castlereagh will soon be released for Public Exhibition. The RWSs will set our options and priorities for improving water security in NSW rivers over a 20 year period

If you have any questions about anything raised in this update please feel free to contact Will Mooney on **0404 163 700** or Kaleana Reyland on **0407031180** or email: **eo@mldrin.org.au**