



Meeting Update

Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations

Meeting Details: MLDRIN Board Meeting
Date: 27 th and 28 th February 2020
Venue: Rydges on Swanston, Carlton, VIC

Attendance

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

Apologies: Melissa Jones (Latji Latji)

Absent: Jida Gulpilil (Dhudhuroa)

Agency Staff:

- MDBA: Tony McLeod, Ken Scott, Mark Foreman, Susan Goff, Gavin Hesse (via teleconference), Digby Jacobs (via teleconference), Andrew Lowes (via teleconference), Ian Krebs (via teleconference)
- Office of the Inspector General of Murray Darling Basin Water Resources: Ramzi Jabbour, Liz McDonald
- NSW DPIE: Darren Murray, Miranda Pade, Shigofta Ali, Emma Soloman
- Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation: Trisha Strout, Rebecca Hayden

Key issues discussed:

- Directors reviewed correspondence including two complaints and a letter from Yorta Yorta Nations Aboriginal Corporation (YYNAC) advising of the YYNAC Board's decision to remove itself from MLDRIN.
- Directors discussed delays in preparation of [NSW Water Resource Plans](#). Stakeholder Advisory Panel meetings are being convened to review changes arising from public consultation.
- Directors reviewed a draft wokplan for the Executive Officer. Directors discussed approaches to ensure cultural safety during projects and workshops and maintain rigour of the Aboriginal Waterways Assessment tool.
- Directors discussed projects and positions supported by funding from Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). Additional funds may be available to oversee a second round of Aboriginal Waterway Assessments (AWAs), and for project support positions. The Board advised the Executive Officer to develop a detailed proposal for funding.
- Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) staff provided updates on key

activities including:

- Appointment of an [Indigenous Authority member to the Board of the MDBA](#). Appointment may take another four weeks. The new Authority members will be involved in a number of important activities across Basin Plan implementation.
- [Funding and co-funding of MLDRIN](#): MDBA recognises the need for secure and adequate funding for MLDRIN. NBAN and MLDRIN Boards will be discussing options with MDBA over next month.
- New Departmental and organisational structures: MDBA is now under the [Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment \(DAWE\)](#) and the new Minister is Keith Pitt.
- [Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism \(SDLAM\) Projects](#): directors expressed concerns about poor consultation for many projects and lack of commonwealth oversight of funding. MDBA asked that any concerns should be communicated to them.
- NSW Water Resource Plan (WRP) development: NSW has responded to a letter from the Federal Water Minister, stating that they anticipate delivery of WRPs by mid-2020. The Federal Minister is still considering the response and whether to activate 'step-in' powers to write WRPs on NSW's behalf.
- [A Draft Native Fish Management and Recovery Strategy](#) has been released. It includes a First Nations' chapter, including 8, strong recommendations. The First Nations' chapter foregrounds First Nations' values and understanding about Fish, including rights of Fish.
- The first meeting of a new [Community of Practice for First Nations engagement and partnerships in water](#) was scheduled for 23-24th March. It has since been postponed.
- The [2020 Evaluation of the Basin Plan](#), First Nations socio-economic outcomes. MDBA will be putting in place a regular monitoring program and tracking basin plan performance indicators for socioeconomic outcomes.
- The Deputy Inspector General and Director from the [Office of the Inspector General of Murray Darling Basin Water Resources](#) provided an update on an inquiry into water management and water sharing in the Basin. The inquiry will focus on issues relating to inflows and allocations in the Southern Basin. A report is due to the Minister by 31st March.
- NSW DPIE Water Staff attended and provided updates on development of a State-wide Aboriginal Water Policy, Regional Water Strategies and Water Resource Plans. A State [Aboriginal Water Policy](#) is under development and should be in draft form by June. This will be guided by input from Nations' input to Water Resource Plans. DPIE is also considering regional Aboriginal advisory bodies for water management. [Regional Water Strategies](#) are being developed for the Lachlan and Macquarie, with other valleys to follow. These will include Options for measures to give effect to First Nations objectives and interests. NSW DPIE has gone back to Stakeholder Advisory Panels (SAPs) for a final round of consultation on [Water Resource Plans](#), which they plan to submit to MDBA by June 2020.

- [Murray Darling Basin Aboriginal Water Entitlements Program](#) (\$40M fund for acquisition of water for Basin First Nations). Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC) representatives attended and provided an update of their negotiations with the Federal Department of Agriculture. MLDRIN has outlined key conditions for support of the \$40M program and ILSC agrees in principles with most of these. Key points from the discussion include:
 - ILSC will seek to draw on interest from the \$40M to manage overheads and administration costs for the program
 - A Steering Committee will make decisions about design, delivery and monitoring of the program. The Steering committee will design the whole decision making process and make funding decisions.
 - ILSC will not remove itself from the Steering Committee which will oversee delivery of the funding as this is considered too much of a risk to the ILSC Board,
 - MLDRIN and NBAN would be supported to be able to promote the program and facilitate applications
 - All further decisions on MLDRIN participation on the program will be referred to the Full Gathering.
 - ILSC will respond in detail to MLDRIN's conditions to enable the Full Delegation to make an informed decision on participation.
- MDBA staff provided a briefing on the recent [Southern Connected Basin Environmental Watering Committee \(SCBEWC\)](#) meeting. SCBEWC is the forum that supports coordination of delivery of water for the environment across multiple water holders and jurisdictions in the Southern Basin. The Committee has invited MLDRIN to participate as a member. The water holders are about to start planning now on the water year starting 1st July. There will be significant engagement over the next two months to help plan for next years water year.

Key resolutions and decisions:

- The MLDRIN Board reviewed and approved previous meeting minutes and correspondence from November 2019 to 27th February 2020.
- The MLDRIN Board Approved a draft workplan for the Executive Officer
- The MLDRIN Board Reviewed an application for membership from Shaun Berryman for Barapa Barapa Nation and referred the application to the next Full Gathering for endorsement
- The MLDRIN Board agreed that an application for membership by Ngurai Illum will be deferred until the outcomes of current court proceedings are determined.
- The MLDRIN Board adopted a new Cultural Safety and Wellbeing Policy and procedures.
- Directors identified Kingsley Abdulla as nominee to attend meetings of the Southern Connected Basin Environmental Watering Committee (SCBEWC). Brendan Kennedy and Kaleana Reyland will also attend as observers for the April

Committee meeting.

- Directors requested the Executive Officer to draw up a proposal for funding for additional AWA projects in Victoria and conduct a risk assessment of the activities.

Key upcoming dates

- 31st March 2020: Reporting date for the [Inquiry into the management of Murray–Darling Basin Water Resources](#)
- 5th April 2020: submissions due on the [Draft Report of the Murray-Darling Basin Socio-Economic Assessment Panel](#)
- 6th April: Submissions due on the [Draft Native Fish Recovery Strategy](#)
- 14th and 15th May 2020: Next MLDRIN Full Gathering (please note, maybe subject to change as a result of Covid-19 response)

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**