

Murray–Darling Basin Authority
Meeting 105 – 6 December 2016
Minutes

Members in Attendance: The Hon Neil Andrew (Chair); Ms Di Davidson; Mr George Warne; Professor Barry Hart; Ms Susan Madden; and the MDBA Chief Executive, Mr Phillip Glyde.

Supported by relevant agency staff.

Agenda Item 1: Opening of meeting, disclosure of interests and apologies

1. The Chair, Mr Neil Andrew, opened the meeting at 8.30 am and welcomed members and MDBA staff. There were no apologies.

Conflict of Interest

2. No members declared a conflict of interest with items on the agenda. However, Mr George Warne reported his company had been asked for advice on Murray flows. Due to the likely recurrence of the request he would absent himself during discussion of any operational issue. Ms Susan Madden reported that she would update the conflicts register as she had a small role in projects that may include Basin Plan considerations.
3. The Authority **noted** the opening remarks of the Chair.

Agenda Item 2: Adoption of Draft Agenda

4. The Authority **adopted** the agenda for meeting 105 noting that agenda item 13 – Sustainable diversion limit accounting update would be considered after agenda item 9 – Chief Executive’s report.

Agenda Item 3: Confirmation of Minutes of Meeting 104

5. Members discussed the draft minutes from meeting 103 and the amendments requested at the last meeting.
6. The Authority:
 - (a) **confirmed** the minutes of MDBA 103 – 13 October 2016 inclusive of those amendments
 - (b) **agreed** to consider the minutes of MDBA 104 – 8 November 2016 out of session.

Agenda Item 4: Chair’s report

7. The Chair noted the recent consultation meetings held, primarily in the northern Basin, in relation to the Basin Plan amendments and particularly thanked the Chief Executive, Mr Phillip Glyde, for his efforts. He also thanked MDBA staff for the logistics and presentation support. He noted the value added by the involvement of staff from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office and the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries.
8. The Authority **noted** the Chair’s report.

Agenda Item 5: BCC Chair's report

9. Mr Rory Treweeke, Basin Community Committee (BCC) Chair, provided an update on the activities of the BCC. He advised that the recent announcement of proposed changes to sustainable diversion limits (SDLs) in the northern Basin was increasing the pressure for SDL adjustments in the southern Basin on the basis of social-economic impacts.
10. Mr Treweeke noted that there was a misunderstanding of the proposed 320 GL recovery target, with some people mistakenly thinking this meant there would be a 70 GL reduction in the water available in the system below Menindee.
11. Mr Treweeke also advised it would be valuable at the next meeting of the BCC for members to be provided with a briefing from the MDBA on the process for bringing forward efficiency measures ("up water") including the roles and responsibilities of the jurisdictions.
12. The Authority **noted** the report from the Basin Community Committee Chair.

Agenda Item 6: NBAC Chair's report

13. Mr Mal Peters, Chair of the Northern Basin Advisory Committee (NBAC), commented on the support for toolkit measures and provided feedback on the Basin Plan amendment community meetings.
14. Mr Peters also noted the last meeting of NBAC would be held in Moree on Monday, 12 December 2016.
15. The Authority Chair thanked Mr Peters for his leadership and acknowledged the valuable work of NBAC members.
16. The Authority **noted** the report from the Northern Basin Advisory Committee Chair.

Agenda Item 7: ACSEES Chair's report

17. The Authority Chair welcomed Professor Stuart Bunn, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Social Economic and Environmental Sciences (ACSEES).
18. Professor Bunn reported that ACSEES had expressed the strong view that the MDBA should continue to prosecute the original case for water reform which had led to the formation of the Basin Plan. Members suggested the MDBA remind stakeholders that the Basin Plan is a long-term reform to transition communities, industries and the environment to a more secure and sustainable future, by better protecting catchment functions and by building the resilience of key natural assets.
19. Professor Bunn also conveyed ACSEES' desire to work more proactively with the MDBA, focussing on providing advice to inform the MDBA's future research agenda and activities. This would include providing integrated multi-disciplinary advice, particularly in the scoping and planning stages of MDBA initiatives.
20. The Authority **noted** the report from the Advisory Committee on Social Economic and Environmental Sciences Chair.

Agenda Item 8: Authority members' updates

21. The Authority members discussed recent Basin Plan amendment meetings they had attended and noted the Chair and Ms Di Davidson's recent attendance at Ministerial Council in Adelaide.
22. The Authority **noted** the updates from the Authority members.

Agenda Item 9: Chief Executive's report

23. Mr Glyde highlighted recent corporate matters including MDBA funding, the need to reconvene the Enterprise Bargaining team following an unsuccessful staff vote and forthcoming requests to members to address freedom of information requests.
24. Members were advised by Mr David Dreverman about the increased pressure from slow-towing south of Echuca and the effect of higher waves on infrastructure and the natural structure of water ways. They were also informed that black water across some areas of the southern Basin was still a problem for fish health and there were areas where salinity was rising.
25. The Authority **noted** the report from the Chief Executive.

Agenda Item 10: Water resource planning update

26. Members were updated on progress made by jurisdictions on water resource plans, particularly that Queensland had formally submitted the Warrego–Paroo–Nebine water resource plan (WRP).
27. The Authority:
 - (a) **noted** the update on the approach to development and assessment of water resource plans (WRP)
 - (a) **noted** the update on the assessment of the proposed Warrego–Paroo–Nebine WRP
 - (b) **agreed** to provide any feedback on the draft recommendations about the proposed Warrego–Paroo–Nebine WRP by Friday 9 December.

Agenda item 11: Water resource planning position statements

28. Members were provided with a briefing on Water Resource Plan (WRP) Position Statements and requested to endorse ten proposed Position Statements.
29. The Authority noted the WRP Position Statements had been developed with input from all relevant MDBA teams and approved by the WRP Steering committee.
30. The Authority **adopted** the Water Resource Plan (WRP) Position Statements titled:

1B	Interpreting 'have regard to'
1F	Overall consistency
1K	Presenting WRP documentation
1M	WRP effect under state law
3K	What take is not to be included in the WRP?
3J	Limiting take
7A	Requirements for water quality management plans in groundwater WRPs
7B	Alternative water quality target values
10A	Monitoring obligations
10B	Estimate of Long term Annual Average Take - 'measured and not measured'

Agenda item 12: SDL Adjustment update

31. Following an update on recent SDL developments, members discussed possible outcome scenarios and policy issues associated with the SDL adjustment through the course of 2017. They noted that this matter was to be further considered by the Basin Officials Committee (BOC) at its next meeting in December 2016.

32. The Authority indicated it would further discuss its course of action on this matter following consideration by the BOC in December.
33. The Authority:
- (a) **noted** the uncertainty and risks highlighted in the paper
 - (b) **noted** its role in agreeing to the method of assessment used
 - (c) **discussed** the options for managing the different outcomes associated with the sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism
 - (d) **agreed** to consider the issues further following consideration by the Basin Officials Committee in December
 - (e) **noted** that the revised Finalisation Plan had been agreed to by the Murray–Darling Basin Ministerial Council and that the second notification dates had been changed with passing of the bill by the Parliament
 - (f) **requested** information on the Commonwealth On Farm Further Irrigation Efficiency (COFFIE) program and the trial that had commenced in South Australia.

Agenda item 13: Sustainable diversion limit accounting update

34. The Authority received an update on the progress of implementing SDL accounting and associated arrangements under the Basin Plan.
35. Members discussed the need for transparency and considered a range of options for constructive progression of the issues, noting the BOC would consider SDL accounting in December 2016.
36. The Authority:
- (a) **noted** the most recent comprehensive water accounting report released by the Authority was for the year ending June 2012
 - (b) **noted** progress of sustainable diversion limits accounting and preparation for implementing sustainable diversion limits from July 2019.
 - (c) **agreed** to reconsider sustainable diversion limit accounting following consideration by the Basin Officials Committee at its December 2016 meeting.

Agenda item 14: Basin Plan amendment update

37. Members received a report on the Basin Plan amendment consultations held to date in Warren, Walgett, Wee Waa, Brewarrina and Bourke.
38. An update on all Basin Plan consultations would be provided to the Authority at its February 2017 meeting.
39. The Authority **noted** the status and next steps for the Basin Plan amendments.

Agenda item 15: Groundwater – resource condition limits and management rules in groundwater resources

40. The Authority **noted** the information provided on resource condition limits and management rules in groundwater resources.

Agenda item 16a: Complementary measures

41. The Authority **noted**:

- (a) the key outcomes from the Murray–Darling Basin Ministerial Council regarding complementary measures
- (b) the update regarding development of a complementary measures assessment framework and method.

Agenda item 16b: Natural cues

- 42. The Authority received a presentation on the natural cues approach that could allow improved coordination of environmental water entitlement use with the management of other water entitlements and river management operations.
- 43. Members discussed the key outcomes of the Ministerial Council meeting, particularly that work would continue to be progressed with the aim that states would bring forward a feasibility-level business case in consultation with environmental water holders by early 2017.
- 22. The Authority:
 - (a) **noted** the proposed path forward for the development of a natural cues business case, for consideration as a supply measure proposal
 - (b) **noted** the key outcomes from the Murray–Darling Basin Ministerial Council regarding natural cues
 - (c) **discussed** the issues noted as potential concerns for a natural cues project.

Agenda item 17: BP annual report 2015–16

- 44. Members discussed the report and timing requirements, including the first time requirement for the Minister to table in Parliament by 31 December 2016.
- 45. The Authority **agreed**:
 - (a) to provide comments on the draft Basin Plan Annual Report by 8 December 2016
 - (b) that the Chief Executive approve the final report once the Authority’s comments on the draft have been addressed.

Agenda item 18: 2017 Basin Plan evaluation

- 46. The Authority **noted**:
 - (a) the proposed approach for the 2017 Evaluation outline
 - (b) that a full Evaluation Plan would be presented to the Authority at its first meeting in 2017.

Agenda item 19: Other business

- 47. There was no other business.

Agenda item 20: Next meeting and 2017 meeting schedule

- 48. The Authority:
 - (a) **noted** the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 14 February 2017 (MDBA 106) in Melbourne
 - (b) **agreed** to hold one meeting each quarter in a regional Murray–Darling Basin location

- (c) **noted** the proposed Authority meeting calendar
- (d) **noted** the draft 2017 Secretariat meeting schedule.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 4.10 pm.