



# Basin Community Committee

*Bringing a community perspective to the Murray–Darling Basin*

## COMMUNIQUE

13 July 2023

The Basin Community Committee met on 13 June 2023, on Gomeroi Country, prior to the [River Reflections Conference](#) in Narrabri.

This was the last meeting Mr Phil Duncan Chaired however his term on the Committee continues until the end of March 2024. Chief Executive, Andrew McConville thanked Mr Duncan for his leadership of the Committee, and the way in which he provided the Committee's views to the Authority, Basin Officials Committee and the Ministerial Council in a collaborative way. Mr McConville welcomed Rachel Kelly as the incoming Chair and thanked her for her willingness to lead in an exciting time.

Members shared updates about their communities noting that a few are still recovering from the devastating flooding. They noted concerns regarding the potential higher insurance premiums for properties not inundated. Some of the members commented that a recent drier period has rural communities concerned, particularly following the predicted return of an El Nino sequence from the Bureau of Meteorology.

The members appreciated the presentation and discussions with the [Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder](#), Dr Simon Banks. Dr Banks informed them of recent events, for example, the fish deaths near Menindee, as well as work that is currently underway. The Inspector-General of Water Compliance, Hon. Troy Grant also provided information including the status of the NSW Water Resource Plans, the metering scorecard and the NSW metering program and the increasing use of social media for updates of activities from his Office.

The Committee encouraged all community members and water users to take advantage of invitations to provide feedback to the [Basin Plan Review](#) process and other work such as the Basin Condition Monitoring Program. The Committee is looking forward to further involvement in the engagement process for the Basin Plan Review.

In relation to ongoing implementation of the Basin Plan, the members stressed that obtaining positive tangible outcomes is far more important than meeting timelines or volumetric numbers. They agreed there is a risk that beneficial outcomes will be overlooked if priority is given to meeting hard timelines, which means that flexibility is necessary. The Committee acknowledged that communities across the Basin have different views on how to implement the Plan and encouraged the Australian Government to actively consider all of the potential solutions for recovering water.

**The Basin Community Committee is an independent advisory committee to the Murray–Darling Basin Authority and the Murray–Darling Basin Ministerial Council. Established under the Water Act 2007, the Committee ensures the voices of diverse communities in the Basin are heard.**

**For more information on the Basin Community Committee**

 [www.mdba.gov.au/BCC](http://www.mdba.gov.au/BCC)  1800 630 114



# Basin Community Committee

## *Bringing a community perspective to the Murray–Darling Basin*

A presentation about the Capacity and Shortfall Program and [Barmah-Millewa Feasibility Study](#) was well received. There was a discussion with the program's Independent Expert Panel members, Ms Dianne Davidson AM and Mr Paul Simpson and MDBA staff. The Committee noted the potential for a shortfall in water delivery in the southern basin as well as the work in progress to understand diminishing regulated flow rates in the Barmah-Millewa Reach. The Committee appreciates being kept informed of work being done in this area and emphasised the importance of updates to the community and water users on this work.

Professor Jacki Schirmer from Canberra University presented to the Committee and discussed a set of proposed indicators that will be used for the Murray–Darling Basin Community Values Project to measure and monitor changes in the way communities value water. Feedback provided by the Committee will be used in the formulation of the next stage of this work for the [Basin Condition Monitoring Project](#).

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to meet jointly with the Basin Officials Committee and the Murray–Darling Basin Authority board, highlighting the importance of a strong relationship and open dialogue. The Committee continued to share with the BOC and Authority the importance of the Transparency Principles the Committee has developed.

### **BACKGROUND**

Members of the Committee were appointed by the Authority after an extensive selection process involving all Basin governments. They reflect the diverse perspectives of towns and communities across the Basin, as well as the diversity of experiences around water reform.

Contact your local Basin Community Committee member via [engagement@mdba.gov.au](mailto:engagement@mdba.gov.au) to share your views on how the Basin Plan is being implemented.

See a full list of members and map of their locations at [www.mdba.gov.au/BCC](http://www.mdba.gov.au/BCC)

**The Basin Community Committee is an independent advisory committee to the Murray–Darling Basin Authority and the Murray–Darling Basin Ministerial Council. Established under the Water Act 2007, the Committee ensures the voices of diverse communities in the Basin are heard.**

**For more information on the Basin Community Committee**

 [www.mdba.gov.au/BCC](http://www.mdba.gov.au/BCC)  1800 630 114



# Basin Community Committee

*Bringing a community perspective to the Murray–Darling Basin*

## The Basin Community Committee’s Transparency Principles

1. Communities see engagement as a key tool to achieve transparency, and there should be opportunities to involve communities in discussing issues and solutions before a decision is made. This should include opportunities across all levels of decision making. Governments should make sure the process for decision-making is clear, and the right information and adequate time is provided to allow communities and stakeholders to participate.
2. Communication and engagement on Basin issues should be coordinated and consistent. Basin governments should, where possible, present consistent information on cross-jurisdictional issues, and where possible, should communicate and engage on these matters in a joint manner.
3. Communities should be provided with better information on decision making. This should include detail on what decisions were made and the reasons why, the information/data used, and how community input was considered. This could be done by using communiques more effectively for governance committees, and open data and modelling.
4. Purpose and outcomes of engagement and consultation should be made clear to stakeholders, respecting their different interests and viewpoints. Governments should be explicit on what the purpose of the engagement is, what is/can’t be influenced and close the loop on how input from stakeholders impacted decisions, if relevant.
5. Information should be developed and presented to meet the needs of Basin stakeholders. This includes providing stakeholders with both foundational and technical information to build capability to navigate the complex water management system and contribute effectively when consultation opportunities arise. This also includes providing information in formats and/or at different scales that meet user needs, considering multiple stakeholders with differing levels of involvement, interest, and access to technology.
6. Information should be provided on progress and outcomes of policy and management actions. This should consider how to share information in a timely way throughout the lifecycle of major policy or operational changes, not just at the end. Information on progress and outcomes should be open and honest and include recognition and accountability of all outcomes - both positive and negative.
7. Communities seek a commitment from Basin governments to continuously improve their efforts to increase transparency.

**The Basin Community Committee is an independent advisory committee to the Murray–Darling Basin Authority and the Murray–Darling Basin Ministerial Council. Established under the Water Act 2007, the Committee ensures the voices of diverse communities in the Basin are heard.**

**For more information on the Basin Community Committee**

 [www.mdba.gov.au/BCC](http://www.mdba.gov.au/BCC)  1800 630 114