



Basin Community Committee

Bringing a community perspective to the Murray–Darling Basin

COMMUNIQUE

22 December 2022

The Basin Community Committee met on the 29 and 30 November 2022, with most members attending in person on Ngunnawal Country (Canberra).

BCC members shared updates from their communities, which for many across the Basin was local experiences of flood conditions. Some communities have experienced successive flooding over the past 12 months, others are still awaiting the inevitable arrival of the flood peaks.

The Committee provide insights on the impacts of flooding on their communities– loss of life, the physical damage to roads, infrastructure, homes and businesses; the enormous task of clean up; and the sometimes-hidden aspects of trauma, impacts to community wellbeing, and the emerging health risks of water and mosquito borne diseases. Access to labour also continues to be a key challenge for communities across the Basin.

The Committee discussed the ongoing importance of culturally respectful engagement with First Nations people in water management. The Committee welcomed the MDBA's ongoing commitment to First Nations of the Basin and encouraged continued dialogue with nations to deliver meaningful and improved approaches to engagement.

The Committee received updates on the implementation of the Basin Plan from:

- Andrew McConville – Chief executive of the MDBA
- Lyn O'Connell- Chair of the Basin Officials Committee
- The Hon. Troy Grant – Inspector General Water Compliance
- Dr Simon Banks – Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder

The Committee also received an update from the MDBA on the progress of SDL Adjustment mechanism projects and NSW Water Resource Plans. The Committee noted the MDBA's recent SDLAM Assurance Report which concluded that some projects are unlikely to or will not be delivered by the 2024 deadline. The Committee encouraged Governments to consider the future pathway for these projects to provide communities with greater clarity with a focus on good projects that will deliver environmental outcomes.

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  1800 630 114



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Committee Chair Phil Duncan updated the Committee on the Ministerial Council meeting that he recently attended, where he provided advice from the Committee on Basin water management.

The Committee reiterated the importance of engaging with communities as Governments consider ongoing implementation of the Plan, including remaining water recovery and agreed to publish the recent advice that they provided the Murray Darling Basin Ministerial Council (Attachment A). The Committee looks forward to providing Ministers and the Authority with ongoing advice on water management in the Basin.

Committee Chair Phil Duncan advised the Committee of his intention to step down from the role in mid-2023, allowing time for succession to a new Chair.

The Committee also received presentations on River Murray inter-valley transfers, and the progress of a number of social and economic projects currently underway.

The Committee welcomed an update from the Bureau of Meteorology on the release of the Version 3 of the Murray-Darling Basin Water Information Portal (MDB WIP), publicly released on November 30.

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 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

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Basin Community Committee – Water Recovery Advice

ORIGINAL COMMITMENT

- The Basin Community Committee (BCC) advice relates to water recovery including the remaining bridging the gap, shortfall in SDLAM (605GL) and 450GL

STATUS

- The BCC is a statutory committee established under the Water Act 2007 (Cwth) appointed to advise the Ministerial Council and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority. The 15-member committee reflects the diversity of communities across the Basin

CURRENT COMMUNITY CONTEXT AND SENTIMENT

- Basin communities have been on a long and difficult journey of water reform, and this should be recognised and acknowledged
- Significant modernisation and efficiency has already been achieved across the Basin
- Communities are clear that the Basin Plan should be about outcomes and not just numbers
- One size does not fit all - there are significant differences between communities as some regions will accept recovery options that others won't. The acceptable pace of change is also variable between communities

OPPORTUNITIES

- Water recovery options and approaches need to be specifically tailored to suit regions – this should include supporting programs
- Communities want a clear signal on what water recovery options governments are willing to consider and what is not 'on the table'
- A lot of time and effort has brought us to this point – care should be taken to ensure decisions don't compromise already developed relationships
- First Nations voices must be involved to provide their advice on opportunities and the potential impacts of projects
- There is a genuine thirst for climate data and timely information to be provided and incorporated into decision making

ACTIONS

- Explore water recovery options that are acceptable to localised communities
- Decisions of the future of SDLAM projects should be made now, not wait until 2024
- Consider allowing additional time for the SDLAM projects to deliver what was intended
- Communities need to hear what has been achieved to date. It is important to use plain English messaging to communicate this
- Consider BCC advice when engaging with community and stakeholders

