

## The MD-WERP Newsletter

December 2021

### *From the Chair*

It's been great to see the strategic research program come together in 2021, especially given how trying this year has been for all of us.

The MD-WERP team has made considerable efforts towards ensuring this program is robust and will deliver new information that will help to improve the management of the Murray-Darling Basin.

A highlight for me has been following the researchers and end users co-designing the research plans for the four research themes (climate adaptation, hydrology, environmental outcomes, and social, economic and cultural outcomes). This collaborative, user-focussed approach will enhance the impact of our research on how the Basin is managed in the future.

In early 2022, I'm looking forward to the last of the research plans being finalised and seeing the research get underway. I'm also keenly anticipating our first program gathering which will be an integral part of our program calendar to share and shape the research direction and network with our peers.

Thanks to everyone for your contributions and interest in this program during the year. I hope you all manage to have a relaxing break and enjoy the festive season with family and friends. I look forward to working with you in 2022.

Prof Rob Vertessy  
Chair, MD-WERP Governing Panel

As the MD-WERP Project Delegate, I would like to welcome you to our first quarterly newsletter to keep you abreast of the program's progress.

We are now 6 months into our 4-year program. To refresh your memory about the program, visit the [Get Involved page](#).

What a year it's been! Deeds and contracts in place. Governance, leadership teams and working groups all established and guiding the program. Research underway and our first deliverables through the door! We'd like to reflect on some of our key achievements of the past 12 months and look ahead to 2022.

- Our research partners, CSIRO and La Trobe University, have established the MD-WERP Research Consortium that bring together world class and multi-disciplinary research capabilities, science leadership and First Nations collaborators to deliver high quality, practical research on the Murray-Darling Basin. The overarching MD-WERP Research Consortium comprises two consortia:

- CSIRO established a consortium with Deakin University, Ewater and Alluvium to deliver research on the 2 themes of climate change and hydrology.
- La Trobe University established a consortium with Griffith University, Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations, Murray Lower Darling Indigenous Nations and IDEEA Group. They are delivering research on environmental outcomes, and social, economic and cultural outcomes.
- A February workshop with more than 60 attendees began a collaborative co-design process between the Research Consortium and the Commonwealth. This helped ensure researchers and end-user perspectives are built into the research program design and that research questions are reviewed and refined to ensure investments are directed to high value projects with defined pathways to impact. This crucial process increases the chance of the research eventually being adopted – our end game.
- To further this, we also established an end-user advisory group for each theme. With representatives from the Research Consortium, the Australian Government, state governments and universities the groups will meet regularly to provide advice and input on the research plans and to raise awareness of the program.
- We shared and discussed the research plans with a broad range of users during development, including a briefing to Australian Government partners attended by more than 150 people. The plans will be reviewed annually, and ongoing collaboration will ensure the research will deliver the expected outcomes and benefits for the Murray–Darling Basin.
- After months of co-design, the Research Consortium partners submitted research plans that guide the strategic research for the next 4 years to the Governing Panel in early June. Plans for themes 1 and 2 were signed off and research for some projects got underway.
- Co-design with Murray Lower Darling Indigenous Nations and Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations is progressing for Themes 3 and 4, with a focus on improving the cultural, economic and social outcomes for Aboriginal people. We'll also be working to ensure that our First Nations collaborators are engaged in Theme 1 and 2 and the program more broadly.
- Decision-making and advisory groups were established and are now operational; the Governing Panel of Commonwealth partners met 4 times during the year driving key decisions forward; an Executive Leadership Group and a Science Leadership Group both met and gave direction to the program and its research; and a Communication and Engagement Steering Group is up and running.
- Two tactical research projects are underway: one using drone technology to study waterbirds and another looking at northern Basin inflows. A further 3 tactical research projects will begin soon examining waterbirds foraging habitat, riverbank stability along the River Murray, and blue green algae.
- Looking ahead to next year, we are looking forward to progressing and finalising the research plans and work orders for themes 3 and 4.

Finally, we have had a few personnel changes; Vicki Woodburn left the MDBA transferring the MDBA Program Delegate role to A/Chief Executive, Andrew Reynolds; Greg Manning has joined the MDBA as Executive Director, Basin Strategy and Knowledge and will play a key role in the program; we are pleased to have onboard a dedicated MD-WERP program manager, Cat Herrmann; and finally, it is

with regret I am leaving the MDBA, however, a MD-WERP Project Delegate replacement will be announced in the new year.

If you're not already, don't forget to continue to check [Get Involved](#) for updates. If you're a research partner and not yet signed up to the knowledge portal, email [mdwerp@mdba.gov.au](mailto:mdwerp@mdba.gov.au) and let us know.

Thanks everyone for all their dedication and hard work getting this exciting program up and running. Have a safe and happy holiday break with your loved ones and the team is looking forward to sharing more news with you in 2022.

Jacqui Hickey

MD-WERP Project Delegate, on behalf of the MD-WERP Implementation Team