

MLDRIN Newsletter February 2018 (2)

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Welcome to MLDRIN News! - Feb 2018

It's been a busy summer for MLDRIN! Just in the last two week, we've seen water issues hit the national headlines again, with changes to the Basin Plan blocked in the Senate, Traditional Owners and community groups mobilising to protect the Darling River and respected scientists highlighting major risks to Basin ecosystems. Read about all this and more below. Please share this newsletter amongst colleagues, family and your community. If you would like to submit info or stories for the next MLDRIN news, you can email executiveofficer.mldrin@gmail.com



Fred Hooper, Chair of NBAN, beside the Culgoa River

Senate backs more water for the Baarka

This month, Traditional Owners voiced their support for a vote in the Australian Senate that disallowed proposed changes to the Murray Darling Basin Plan. The changes, put forward by former Minister for Water Barnaby Joyce, would have seen 70 billion litres (gigalitres) less water recovered for the environment in the Northern Basin rivers, including tributaries of the *Baarka* or Darling River. In a narrow vote the Australian Labor Party and cross-bench Senators backed a disallowance motion put forward by the Greens. The [Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations \(NBAN\)](#) campaigned actively in the lead up to the vote

[Aboriginal Nations \(NDRI\)](#) campaigned actively in the lead up to the vote, highlighting impacts on Country, culture and Aboriginal well-being as a result of cuts in water recovery.

[MLDRIN has spoken up](#) in support of Barkandji Nation who continue to grapple with low-flows, a proposed water pipe-line and allegations of water theft in the headwaters of the Darling River. The Senate vote highlights the reality that governments must listen to all community stakeholders in making decisions about managing water in the Basin. First Nations rights and interests cannot be traded off. Another proposed amendment to the Basin Plan, that would lock in a 605 gigalitre reduction in water recovery for the Southern Basin, is set to be debated in May. MLDRIN will continue to advocate without fear or favour to ensure equitable outcomes for First Nations. You can read MLDRIN's [media release on the Basin Plan amendments here](#)



Water Resource Plan assessments underway

In February, MLDRIN assessed the first Water Resource Plan (WRP) for the Southern Basin. [Water resource plans](#) are documents required under the Commonwealth Basin Plan. All states must prepare WRPs to show how they will manage water and implement the rules set out in the Basin Plan. A key requirement for WRPs is to consider Aboriginal objectives, outcomes, values and uses relating to water resources. The Basin Plan also says that the Murray Darling Basin Authority must seek MLDRIN's views on whether these requirements have been met. The South Australian Murray Region WRP was the first plan formally assessed by MLDRIN. This is a major step in undertaking a key role for MLDRIN. There are 20 WRP areas, covering both surface and groundwater, across the Southern Basin. Basin States, Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations face a huge task in having these complete by 2019.



Pipeline protest highlights local concerns

MLDRIN's new Projects and Engagement Officer Kaleana Reyland joined Barkandji Traditional Owners and local community members protesting the construction of a [pipeline from the Murray River to Broken Hill](#), on the 15th February. Concerned locals gathered at Wentworth, where the Darling and Murray Rivers meet, to voice their opposition to the project. The NSW Government has refused to release a business case for the \$467 million pipeline, that would stretch 270 km, pumping water from the Murray River and cutting off the need to supply drinking water from the Darling River. Barkandji Elder and MLDRIN Delegate Uncle Badger Bates told the rally: "It's part of our traditional obligations to protect the Barka and its natural flows but this pipeline will mean the authorities have less need to let water down the Barka than ever before; it is just a disgraceful waste of money and an underhand way of stopping the Darling for good." For more info check out the [Darling Unchained facebook page](#).

Cultural Flows findings to be released

In March, MLDRIN and the Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations (NBAN) will launch the findings of the landmark National Cultural Flows Research Project. The culmination of over five years work by a host of academics, scientists and Aboriginal researchers, the findings of the Cultural Flows research will provide a clear pathway to embed Aboriginal water rights in Australia's water allocation system. MLDRIN and NBAN Delegates will review the findings of the research at a special Joint Meeting in Dubbo on the 15th and 16th March. Pending Nations approval, the findings will be publicly released shortly after. MLDRIN is excited to share this groundbreaking research with the world. Check out the [MLDRIN](#) and [Cultural Flows Research](#) Facebook pages for updates!



Out and about in the Basin and Beyond

MLDRIN Reps have been attending meetings, workshops and events. Here's a summary of some key activities in the last couple of months:

- Want to have a bigger say in how your Country is managed? **MLDRIN is**

looking for young and emerging Aboriginal leaders in natural resource management and water to participate in a unique training and support program in the Murray Local Land Services region. The Murray Valley Stewards Project will help empower Traditional Owners to shape decisions about how water and natural resources are managed by providing training, leadership skills and support. The first workshop kicks off 8-9th March. Contact MLDRIN's Project and Engagement Officer Kaleana Reyland for more details: kaleana.mldrin@gmail.com, ph. 0407031180

- In December 2017, MLDRIN's Chair met with **NSW Water Minister Niall Blair** to discuss critical timelines for water resource plan development. MLDRIN and NBAN have written to Minister Blair to highlight the urgent need for a coordinated approach to Aboriginal engagement in water resource planning. Regular engagements with the Minister Blair's office have been coordinated to address this ongoing issue.
- Also in December, MLDRIN's Chair and other Directors met with representatives of the [NSW Irrigator's Council](#) to discuss ways to progress Aboriginal rights to access water.
- In January, MLDRIN reps presented at a two day **'We all speak water'** event, hosted by Barapa Barapa Traditional Owners at Gunbower Forest in Northern Victoria. Traditional Owners and water managers from around Victoria presented projects focused on improving recognition of Aboriginal water values. It was an awesome day, showcasing cultural mapping, Aboriginal Waterway Assessments and a range of other exciting work underway across Victoria.
- In January, MLDRIN's Executive Officer attended a meeting of the [Yorta Yorta](#) Council of Elders to provide an update on MLDRIN activities and discuss potential projects. Our Project and Engagement Officer also travelled to Berri, SA, to catch up with the Board of [River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal Corporation \(RMMAC\)](#) to discuss membership and working together. Getting out and about to meet with Traditional Owner organisations is a key part of MLDRIN's work. Let us know if you'd like a visit to discuss Cultural Flows or any other projects.
- The MLDRIN Board of Directors were thrilled to meet with Elders from [Wurrundjeri Land Council](#) during a visit to Melbourne in February. MLDRIN's office is located alongside Wurrundjeri's premises in Abbotsford (beside the Birrarung or Yarra River). Wurrundjeri and MLDRIN reps shared stories and spoke about opportunities to build recognition of Aboriginal water rights.

Upcoming Dates

8th - 9th March: Murray Valley Stewards Program 1st workshop, Deniliquin NSW
15th - 16th March: MLDRIN and Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations Joint Gathering, Dubbo NSW
22nd March: [World Water Day](#) - events across the globe

26th- 28th March: Public Launch events for the National Cultural Flows Research Project (more details coming soon!)

30th April: Public submissions due for the South Australian [Murray-Darling Basin Royal Commission](#), investigating water theft and compliance issues in the Murray Darling Basin

Get it touch! If you have content to submit for future MLDRIN News editions please send your ideas to executiveofficer.mldrin@gmail.com



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