

MLDRIN Newsletter Spring 2017 (2)

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Welcome to MLDRIN News! - Spring 2017

Over the last three months, MLDRIN Delegates, Directors and staff have worked across the board to advance the Aboriginal water rights agenda: from on-ground projects with Traditional Owners to lobbying of Federal Senators and MPs. 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



Attendees at the recent Echuca Declaration Anniversary event, 11th November

Ten years of the Echuca Declaration!

On the 11th November 2017, MLDRIN celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Echuca Declaration: a ground-breaking statement by First Nations from along the Murray River that defined the concept of Cultural Flows. Over fifty Traditional Owners from across the Southern Murray Darling Basin came together at Moama, NSW to reflect on achievements since 2007 and map out a vision for future reform. [The Echuca Declaration](#) represents a critical contribution to water reform in Australia. It spells out First Nation's water values, rights and aspirations. It has influenced policy, ongoing advocacy and

evolving research. MLDRIN believes the Declaration is as relevant as ever and continues to work to progress the mechanisms it spells out.

Highlights of the Echuca Declaration Anniversary included.

- A key-note speech from Damein Bell, Gunditjmara man and Independent Chair for the [National Cultural Flows Research Project](#), who spoke about implementation of the Cultural Flows concept through groundbreaking research and capacity building.
- A panel discussion with key Elders and advocates to reflect on the progress and evolution of Aboriginal water rights ideas since the Declaration was penned.
- Auntie Mary Pappin was awarded the MLDRIN Trophy, recognising the contribution of the Elders, for her strong and ongoing advocacy on cultural flows
- Attendees contributed their ideas and aspirations to inform the next ten years of First Nations water advocacy - these contributions will be included in MLDRIN's new strategic plan.



Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism

The Australian Government will consider an amended limit to water extraction from the rivers of the Southern Murray Darling Basin this year. The Sustainable Diversion Limit (SDL) Adjustment Mechanism could see water extraction limits increase or decrease by up to 5%. In October, the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) [proposed a 605 gigalitre \(thats 605 billion litres\) increase in extraction limits in the Southern Basin](#). MLDRIN has expressed concerns about the potential cultural impacts of increased water extraction and construction of floodplain infrastructure (which will be used to 'offset' environmental water recovery). Read our [submission to the MDBA's Draft Determination here](#). The MDBA has provided support to run a series of workshops for Traditional Owners across the Basin in coming months. Keep your eye on the MLDRIN facebook page for more updates and events.





Campaigning for our Lifeblood

MLDRIN Delegates have been actively involved in a growing movement to restore rivers and empower communities across the Basin. The [Healthy Rivers Fellowship](#) is a training program for people in river communities who are passionate and willing to stand up for healthy rivers. The fellowship has been coordinated by the Australian Conservation Foundation, with the Lifeblood Alliance: a coalition of environment, farmer and Aboriginal organisations. Throughout September, river fellows organised town hall meetings across the Basin, culminating in a Water Summit in Canberra in October. On the final day of the Summit, MLDRIN Delegates joined teams to meet with Senators and MPs during a marathon day of lobbying at Parliament House. The lobbying teams asked key politicians and decision makers to commit to implementing a Basin Plan that sees ecosystems, cultural values and communities truly protected.

A new home for a growing MLDRIN

This August, MLDRIN took up office space at the Abbotsford Convent in Melbourne. The new office will house two new staff: an Administration Officer and Project and Engagement Officer. This set-up represents a huge boost to MLDRIN's capacity, which has been supported through generous funding from the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). The new MLDRIN office is located within Wurrundjeri Tribal Council's offices at Abbotsford convent, next to the Birrarung (Yarra River). Any Delegates who need space to work on water-related issues while in Melbourne should contact the Executive Officer to access the office space.





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:

- In October MLDRIN facilitators worked with Taungurung Traditional Owners to complete an Aboriginal Waterways Assessment (AWA) on the mid-Goulburn River and tributaries.
- On 2nd November, Chair Rene Woods and Director Grant Rigney presented at a public hearing of the Senate [Inquiry into the integrity of the water market in the Murray-Darling Basin](#). Grant and Rene highlighted ongoing risks associated with non-compliance and water resource planning.
- In September, MLDRIN's Executive Officer and Yorta Yorta Nations Aboriginal Corporation acting CEO Damien Morgan-Bulled presented to the Water Resource Planning team of [Goulburn-Murray Water](#), Australia's largest rural water corporation.
- In October, MLDRIN and Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations (NBAN) Directors attended a special meeting for Traditional Owner representatives on [NSW water resource planning Stakeholder Advisory Panels \(SAPs\)](#)
- In September, a regular meeting of South Australian MLDRIN representatives and Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) staff was held in Swan Reach, to discuss water resource planning and reviews of Water Allocation Plans.
- Throughout Sept-November, MLDRIN Directors have provided input to the development of a roadmap for Aboriginal access to water for economic development in Victoria. \$5m has been allocated to rolling out the roadmap, with consultants [Aither](#) conducting preliminary research.
- MLDRIN continues to be an active participant in the Research and Planning Committee for the [National Cultural Flows Research Project](#). The project will deliver findings and research products early in 2018!

Upcoming Dates

28th November: Aither host a workshop for Victorian Traditional Owners to develop outcomes for improving access to water for economic development.

29th November-1st December: Joint MLDRIN/NBAN Board Meeting, Dubbo

11-13th December: NSW Stakeholder Advisory Panel three-day workshop

15th December: MDBA to submit a proposed [SDL Adjustment figure](#) to the Federal Minister for Water Resources

February 2018: Federal Parliament to vote on a disallowance motion for Basin Plan amendments [tabled last week](#) (including changes to water extraction limits in the Northern Basin and Groundwater areas).

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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