



Welcome to MLDRIN News! - December 2018

We love sharing stories and updates about MLDRIN's work to advance Aboriginal water rights across the Southern Murray Darling Basin! We acknowledge the Elders and Traditional Owners who are working across the region to protect and restore our sacred rivers. If you would like to submit info or stories for the next MLDRIN news email eo@mldrin.org.au



Wiradjuri kid's dance performance by the Murrumbidgee

2018 AGM brings in a new Board and fresh ideas

Delegates and observers from twenty different First Nations across the Southern Basin attended the MLDRIN AGM on Wiradjuri Country, in Wagga

Wagga on 15th and 16th November. Delegates endorsed new members from eight different nations and elected an expanded Board of ten Delegates to oversee the strategic direction of MLDRIN over the next two years. Delegates also shared views and discussed important topics such as First Nations' involvement in environmental water planning and water resource planning. A highlight of the meeting was a dance performance by local Wiradjuri kids, beside the Murrumbidgee River (pictured). Remember you can always view the [detailed updates](#) from our meetings and an updated list of membership on our [website](#).



We are hiring! Come and work for MLDRIN

Here's your chance to work with First Nations in the Murray-Darling river system to undertake ground-breaking research and drive policy innovation in water management. MLDRIN is hiring a First Nations Water Project Officer to lead implementation of [ground-breaking research tools](#) with our member Nations. We're looking for an enthusiastic and enquiring Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person to work on Country, build partnerships and undertake research with Traditional Owners. The successful candidate will help create cultural management plans for waterways and develop policy that advances Indigenous water rights. Reckon this sounds like you, or know someone who fits the bill? Check out our website for a [full job description and details](#). Applications close Friday 11th January 2019.



'Deal sheet' funding poses opportunities and questions

In May 2018, the Federal Government announced a [commitment of \\$40 million](#) to support First Nations to buy water for cultural and economic purposes. The announcement was part of a deal struck between the Coalition Government and the Australian Labor Party to pass amendments to the Basin Plan. The amendments included a cut of 605 billion litres from the target for returning water to Basin rivers. MLDRIN has been engaging with the office of the Water Minister David Littleproud and staff the Department of Agricultural and Water Resources (DAWR) to discuss options for the use and management of the funding. MLDRIN has developed a scoping paper that explores opportunities to develop a First Nations Water Trust, owned by Southern Basin Traditional Owners.

At the MLDRIN AGM in November DAWR staff attended and asked delegates for input on the best approach for managing the funding. Delegates expressed concerns that the funding might be provided to the Indigenous Land Council (ILC), and called on governments to respect the long work and advocacy of MLDRIN in the Aboriginal water space. Delegates highlighted the benefits of having the funding held and managed by a trust or other entity with ownership retained by First Nations. DAWR staff have informed MLDRIN that they will be undertaking further consultation and developing advice and recommendations to the Federal Water Minister by the end of 2018. MLDRIN staff will communicate any developments with our membership and other key stakeholders as soon as they become clear.

Economic Development Project in Victoria

MLDRIN is collaborating with the University of Melbourne and Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations to undertake a major project that will identify opportunities and pathways for First Nations to access water for economic development. The First Nations water access project will identify sources of unallocated water, opportunities for acquiring water through existing markets and best practice models for holding and using water. The project will support First Nations progress economic development aspirations and strengthen cultural economies through water. The project is part of a \$5M commitment from the Victorian Government to support development a 'roadmap' for access to water for First Nations. [Read more here](#)



Out and about in the Southern Basin and beyond

MLDRIN Delegates and staff have been busy working with Southern Basin Traditional Owners and government agencies to progress First Nations' water rights and interests. Here's a snapshot of what we've been up to.

Murray Lower Darling SAP and EWAG

MLDRIN's Project and Engagement Officer Kaleana Reyland has been busy attending [Stakeholder Advisory Panel \(SAP\)](#) and [Environmental Water Advisory \(EWAG\)](#) meetings for the Murray Lower-Darling Region this week. The SAP meetings are organised by NSW Department of Industry, Water to provide a forum for communities to inform the development of Water Resource Plans. The EWAGs are held to help inform environmental water planning and delivery. It is vital to have Traditional Owner voices in these forums. If you have any issues or concerns about the rivers and wetlands on your Country that you'd like brought up at these meetings, let Kaleana know by emailing kaleana.mldrin@gmail.com

Cultural and biodiversity values at Margooya Lagoon

In September, Tati Tati Traditional Owners and MLDRIN staff (pictured above) undertook an in-depth study of cultural and biodiversity values at [Margooya Lagoon](#), near Robinvale in North West Victoria. The project was a follow-up from an Aboriginal Waterway Assessment conducted in July 2017. The project built on Tati Tati's values and aspirations to develop detailed cultural flow objectives for the lagoon. This is the first step in developing a detailed cultural flow management plan for this important cultural landscape.

Carp Control Plan discussions

In November, MLDRIN's Chair and Executive Officer attended a workshop to discuss plans for consultation with First Nations about plans to control

discuss plans for consultation with First Nations about plans to control European Carp. The Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) is developing a National Carp Control Plan. One option to control carp is to release a herpes virus into rivers where carp are present. The FRDC has committed to consulting with First Nations about their views on this proposal. MLDRIN has argued that First Nations' free, prior and informed consent must be obtained before any release of a foreign virus into rivers could be considered. A consultation program will kick off in 2019 and MLDRIN will further promote any activities.



MLDRIN reps along with First Nations presenters at the Australian Freshwater Sciences Society conference in Adelaide, September 2018

Conferences and presentations

MLDRIN Directors and staff have the message of Aboriginal water rights and cultural flows at conferences and key events over the last few months. In September, MLDRIN's Executive Officer joined a panel at a [Committee for Economic Development of Australia event in Melbourne](#). The panel, also including Dr Jane Doolan from the Productivity Commission and Steve Wan of the National Irrigators Council, discussed the impact of the Basin Plan on communities and the environment. Also in September, MLDRIN representatives presented at the Australian Freshwater Sciences Society conference in Adelaide, highlighting the many great research projects that Traditional Owners are undertaking across the Southern Basin. Finally, in October, MLDRIN Directors and staff presented in a number of sessions at the International Rivers Symposium in Sydney.



Traditional Owners, NSW OEH staff and MLDRIN reps during an Aboriginal Waterway Assessment in the Millewa Forest, NSW

Aboriginal Waterway Assessment in the Millewa Forest

In early November, MLDRIN coordinated an Aboriginal Waterway Assessment in the Millewa Forest, part of the world's largest red gum forest, situated along the Murray and Edwards Rivers in Southern NSW. Funding from NSW Parks and Wildlife supported a group of 14 Traditional Owners to visit sites throughout the forest and record information about the cultural and environmental health. This is the first AWA that MLDRIN has undertaken in NSW. We hope its the first of many!

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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Our mailing address is:

Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations
PO Box 5005
Brunswick North, VIC 3056
Australia

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