

# MLDRIN News

Quarterly news update from  
the Murray Lower Darling  
Rivers Indigenous Nations

Autumn, 2015



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## Welcome to the MLDRIN newsletter!

MLDRIN is a confederation of 24 Sovereign First Nations from the Southern Murray-Darling Basin, Australia. Since 1988 MLDRIN has worked as a united voice, to advance the land and water rights of our Member Nations. This new newsletter will provide a roundup of MLDRIN activities, as well as important news and opportunities. We'd love to hear from anyone who has stories, events or photos to share! Email: [info@mldrin.org.au](mailto:info@mldrin.org.au), visit [www.mldrin.org.au](http://www.mldrin.org.au)

## Nations support remote communities

MLDRIN delegates representing 16 Sovereign First Nations showed their support for remote Indigenous communities facing closure in Western Australia at the most recent MLDRIN full delegation meeting (see photo above).

MLDRIN delegates strongly oppose the forced closure of Indigenous communities anywhere in Australia.



## Check out MLDRIN on social media!

MLDRIN has set up a new Facebook page and Twitter account. Visit [www.facebook.com/mldrin](http://www.facebook.com/mldrin) and like our page to stay in touch, or follow @MLDRIN on Twitter.



## MLDRIN Delegation Meeting

A Full Delegation meeting of MLDRIN was held in Wagga Wagga on March 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>

Thirty delegates representing 16 Sovereign First Nations attended the MLDRIN Full Delegation Meeting in Wagga Wagga this March.

There was a packed agenda for the two-day meeting with presentations from all three State Governments included in MLDRIN territory. Delegates were able to hear from representatives of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia

and the ACT about how each State plans to progress with consultation requirements for Water Resource Plans. Delegates posed a range of questions and gave direct feedback to State representatives. Murray Darling Basin Authority staff also presented on the Groundwater SDL Review being undertaken for certain groundwater areas in Victoria and New South Wales (see below for more information).

Full Delegation meetings are where the real business of MLDRIN happens. They give member-Nations an opportunity to meet directly with Government agencies and put their views across on a wide range of matters.

Delegates also expressed a strong desire to see future meetings held by the river, rather than in a hotel conference room. Please stay tuned for details of the next full delegation meeting!

## Gathering by the Murrumbidgee

A huge highlight of the March MLDRIN gathering was a dance performance by the Dubinya Dancers by the banks of the Murrumbidgee River on Wiradjuri Country. The Dubinya dancers are a dance troupe made up of students from Holy-Trinity Catholic Primary School West Wagga. They are mostly all of

Wiradjuri heritage. The Murrumbidgee dance was perfectly framed by a beautiful sunset on the banks of the River. Following the performance, Delegates were treated to a barbeque prepared by Wiradjuri man Peter Ingram, with the kind assistance of some local community members.



You can view more photos of the evening by the river on our Facebook page:

[www.facebook.com/mldrin](http://www.facebook.com/mldrin)

Thanks to Ebony Woods for the beautiful photos!

# What have we been up to?

MLDRIN delegates and staff have been out and about engaging with key partners and working on country across the Southern Murray Darling Basin.



## Cultural Flows tool trials a success

The Aboriginal Cultural Flows Health Indicator (ACFHI) is a tool that aims to help Aboriginal nations describe, measure and compare the cultural importance of rivers and wetlands. Developed as a partnership between the Murray Darling Basin Authority, MLDRIN and NBAN, the ACFHI was put to the test in late 2014, with pilot programs run in Deniliquin, the Victorian Alps and Walgett (in NBAN country). The trials were a great success, bringing Traditional Owners together on Country and generating much useful data. Gary Murray, an Elder from Dhudhuroa First Nations and MLDRIN delegate was positive about the outcomes. "It is extremely successful and each First Nation community must make it an annual and properly resourced event across cultural flow sectors of their country," he said. The MDBA hopes that the ACFHI can be used to inform

water planning by environmental water managers and State governments.

## MLDRIN meets with Basin stakeholders

Chair Darren Perry has been meeting with key stakeholders, politicians and decision makers to make sure that MLDRIN has a strong voice in the implementation of the Murray Darling Basin Plan. In March, Darren met with incoming Parliamentary Secretary Bob Baldwin and new MDBA Chair Neil Andrew to discuss a partnership between governments and the Sovereign First Nations of the Basin, to deliver Aboriginal Water Rights. Both meetings have opened up valuable, ongoing dialogue. Darren also attended the MDBA Peak Bodies meeting, where representatives of irrigation groups, environmental organisations and others put forward their views on the implementation of the Basin Plan. The Chair and numerous other

MLDRIN delegates regularly meet with State government representatives and water managers to ensure First Nations are being heard in the water debate.

## Visit to Gunbower



In April, MLDRIN's Chair and Executive Officer visited the Gunbower Forest to learn about the Barapa Barapa Cultural Flows Project, being undertaken by members of the Barapa Barapa Nation and the North Central CMA. MLDRIN Board Member Neville Whyman is a key member of the Barapa Cultural team, conducting surveys and mapping of the forest. The Gunbower forest is a site of deep cultural

## Continued

significance to the Barapa people, and the project aims to gather and document rigorous and defensible knowledge of Aboriginal uses and values of waterways and wetlands, in order to develop a set of principles and a framework to guide the determination of cultural flow objectives.

## Darling Anabranh Workshop

MLDRIN Chair Darren Perry and Executive Officer Will Mooney attended a Darling Anabranh Adaptive Management and Monitoring Program (DAAMMP) workshop in Buronga in April. The Darling Anabranh is an ephemeral waterway that runs along an ancient pathway of the Darling River. The DAAMMP workshop was organized to coordinate environmental water delivery and ecological monitoring on the Anabranh.

MLDRIN representatives were able to highlight the importance of incorporating cultural values in the management and monitoring program. MLDRIN will continue to stay in touch with staff from the Murray Darling Freshwater Research Centre (MDFRC) and NSW OEH as they develop the program.

## Water Resource Plans

MLDRIN delegates have been engaging with State and Federal representatives about Aboriginal consultation for Water Resource Plans. Under the Basin Plan, State Governments are required to account for Indigenous water values, uses and objectives. Water Resource Plans offer an opportunity to ensure that water planning reflects Aboriginal people's interests.

All Basin State Governments are currently developing approaches

to undertake consultation for Water Resource Plans. MLDRIN has played a key role as an independent, representative organization that can direct States to appropriate Traditional Owner groups and ensure that the principles of free, prior and informed consent are honored.

In the coming months we will be holding workshops and information sessions to enhance the capacity of Southern Basin Aboriginal Nations to fully and effectively participate in the Water Resource Planning process.

## UTAS water workshop

It seems like everyone is talking about cultural flows! The University of Tasmania has put out a call for presenters for a workshop on 'Indigenous people and saltwater/freshwater governance' held in February 2016. Email [info@mldr.org.au](mailto:info@mldr.org.au) if you'd like more info.

## MDBA Artwork opportunities

The Murray Darling Basin Authority would like to offer MLDRIN Delegates an opportunity to be paid for the use of artwork and photos in MDBA publications.

There are many talented artists amongst MLDRIN delegates and the Nations they represent. If you'd like to see your artwork in print, contact Will Mooney on 0404 163 700 or email: [info@mldr.org.au](mailto:info@mldr.org.au)

## NAIDOC Week

NAIDOC week is held on 5-12 July in 2015. The theme for this year's celebrations is 'We all Stand on Sacred Ground: Learn, Respect and Celebrate.' There are a range of activities and events occurring across the country. This year's theme encourages Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike to recognise the significance of Country and to learn about

## Aboriginal Landholder Information Service

The Victorian Government is coordinating a project that provides training to Indigenous landholders in land management and farm development. Project Coordinator Valerie Little attended the most recent MLDRIN meeting and is keen to develop partnerships with individual nations. For more information contact the project manager: [valerie.little@ecodev.vic.gov.au](mailto:valerie.little@ecodev.vic.gov.au)



## 'We are Ngarrindjeri'

The Ngarrindjeri Nation has produced a beautiful and powerful short film to represent Ngarrindjeri culture, past and present. The 'We are Ngarrindjeri' film can be viewed on Vimeo:

[vimeo.com/98509879](http://vimeo.com/98509879)



## 'Walking on Navajo Water'

The people of the Navajo Nation, covering parts of South West USA, have deep ancestral connections to the freshwater resources of their country. Like Aboriginal Australians, they are fighting to have their water rights recognized, in order to care for country and develop sustainable industries. The 'Walking on Navajo Water' documentary can be viewed at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoVWL3yJwYo>

## Groundwater SDL Review

The Murray Darling Basin Authority has conducted a review of the Sustainable Diversion Limit (SDL) from three underground water resources in Victoria and New South Wales. Traditional Owners will have an opportunity to provide input into the review, which may allow more water to be extracted from these areas.

The Basin plan requires the MDBA to arrange a review of the SDLs (the amount of water that can be sustainably extracted) for three resource units: the Western Porous Rock, Eastern Porous Rock and the Goulburn-Murray Sedimentary Plain. These reviews were specifically requested by the Basin States in order to support increased water use for industry in those areas.

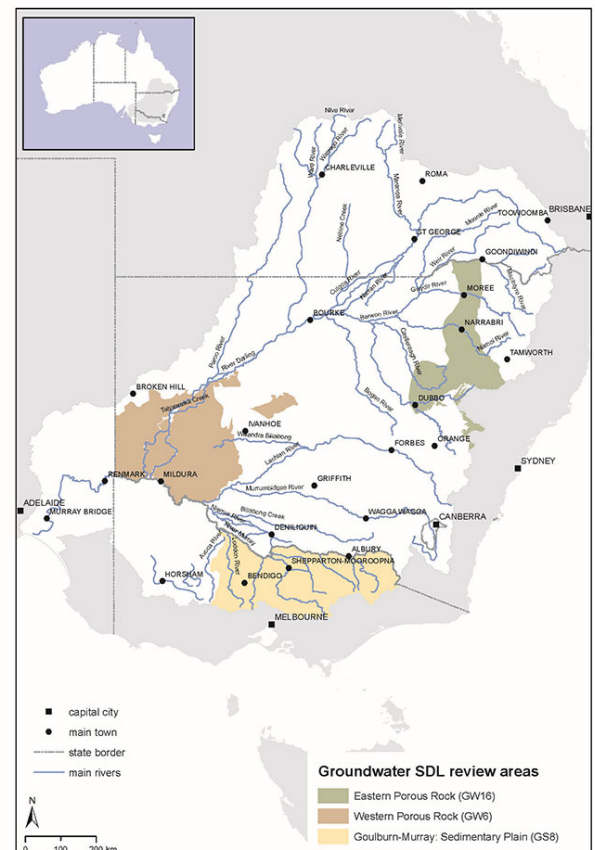
The reviews were completed in 2013, with MDBA deciding that an overall increase of 160 gigalitres would be allowed, provided that States meet certain management rules. MDBA will soon seek public comment on the proposed SDL increase, before the Minister will decide on any changes to the SDL in 2016.

MDBA have informed MLDRIN that an 8-week consultation process will commence from May 2015. It is vital that Traditional Owners in the

groundwater resource areas have an opportunity to have their views heard. MLDRIN has initiated a proposal to conduct Aboriginal consultation for the review and is awaiting a response from the MDBA.

MLDRIN will make sure that all delegates and member nations are fully informed of opportunities for engagement and comment on this review. In the meantime, we recommend that all First Nations consult the detailed map of the proposed Groundwater SDL review areas, to see if their Country is likely to be affected. For more info, maps and reports:

<http://www.mdba.gov.au/what-we-do/water-planning/groundwater/public-feedback-groundwater-review>





## Help MLDRIN speak as a strong, united voice for Sovereign First Nations

Since 1998 MLDRIN has worked to ensure that the voices of Sovereign First Nations from the Southern Murray Darling Basin are heard loud and clear. We need your support to hold Governments to account and achieve big wins for our people. Eligible First Nations who do not currently have Delegates attending MLDRIN meetings are warmly invited to apply. Please email [executiveofficer.mldrin@gmail.com](mailto:executiveofficer.mldrin@gmail.com) for more info

*"The land, water, air and people recognised as one holistic landscape, protected and sustained by our sovereign peoples"*



Maraura	Waywurru	Tatti Tatti	Barapa Barapa
Taungurung	Barkindji	Wamba Wamba	Nari Nari
Wadi Wadi	Wegi Wegi	Yita Yita	Yorta Yorta
Ngarrindjeri	Nyeri Nyeri	Mutthi Mutthi	Dja Dja Wurrung
Wiradjuri	Ngintait	Latji Latji	Wergaia
Wolgalu	Dhuduroa	Yaitmathang	Wotjabaluk