



RIVERINA AND MURRAY JOINT ORGANISATION

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of the Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation, held in the Ian Gilbert Room of the Murrumbidgee Council on Wednesday 13th February 2019 at 10:00am.

VOTING BOARD MEMBERS

Cr Kevin Mack (Albury)	Cr Matthew Hannan (Berrigan)	Cr Peter Laird (Carrathool)
Cr Norm Brennan (Edward River)	Cr Patrick Bourke (Federation)	Cr John Dal Broi (Griffith)
Cr Paul Maytom (Leeton)	Cr Chris Bilkey (Murray River)	Cr Neville Kshenka (Narrandera)

NON-VOTING BOARD MEMBERS

Rowan Perkins (Berrigan)	Rick Warren (Carrathool)	Adam McSwain (Edward River)	Adrian Butler (Federation)
Brett Stonestreet (Griffith)	Jackie Kruger (Leeton)	Des Bilske (Murray River)	
John Scarce (Murrumbidgee)	George Cowan (Narrandera)	James Bolton (DPC)	

MEETING PRESENTERS

Phil Townsend	Murray Darling Basin Authority – Senior Economist
Anita McRae	Primary Health Network
Larah Harding	Primary Health Network

EXECUTIVE OFFICER (NON-VOTING BOARD MEMBER)

Bridgett Leopold	Executive Officer RAMJO
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AGENDA ITEM 1 – WELCOME

The Chairperson welcomed the Board Members and guests to the meeting. The Chairperson offered the newly appointed Executive Officer (Bridgett Leopold) to provide a brief introduction about herself.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – APOLOGIES

Voting Board Members: Cr Ruth McRae (Mayor Murrumbidgee Council) and Cr Bill Sheaffe (Mayor Hay Shire Council)

Non-Voting Members: Adrian Butler (Federation Council), Frank Zaknich (Albury City Council), Kirstyn Thronder (a/g General Manager, Hay Shire Council)

RESOLVED that the apologies be accepted and that leave of absence be granted.

(Moved Cr Laird and seconded Cr Bourke)

AGENDA ITEM 3 – DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY OR OTHER INTEREST

There were no declarations of pecuniary or other interests lodged at the meeting by Board Members or other Designated Persons.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – MINUTES OF 14TH NOVEMBER 2018 BOARD MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the RAMJO Board Meeting held on 14th November 2018 be confirmed.

(Moved Cr Dal Broi and seconded Cr Brennan)

AGENDA ITEM 5 – MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES 14TH NOVEMBER 2018

General Manager of Leeton received a letter from Murrumbidgee Water NSW Customer Advisory Group asking whether Cr Maytom would like to continue his membership on the Group as the RAMJO representative.

Cr Paul Maytom - Water NSW (Vince Kelly) was due to attend one of the upcoming RAMJO meetings.

RESOLVED that the Executive Officer will arrange for Vince Kelly from Water NSW to attend the next RAMJO Board meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 6 – JAMES BOLTON DPC REGIONAL DIRECTOR RIVERINA MURRAY UPDATE

Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) Regional Director of Riverina Murray provided a verbal update. Points of consideration included:

- DPC is working regionally to try and bring agencies together across a number of issues
- Urgent focus on drought response
- Other ongoing projects include those with a social response emphasis. This includes the Riverina Murray Regional Alliance (RMRA), which is focussed on local decision making and supporting the Aboriginal community in the Riverina Murray. There is committed funding towards RAMRA with a multi-agency approach to delivering services to the Aboriginal community, including housing.
- Priorities of NSW Government are clear, and James is willing to meet with stakeholders one on one to discuss further. DPC will be working with RAMJO on how to bring State agencies to forums to ensure cross government decision making, priority alignment and identify funding opportunities. This will include State Government representation on the RAMJO Sub-Committees
- This includes opportunities via the My Community Project (a community based fund). Between \$20,000 and \$200,000 available. Website and details: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/projects-and-initiatives/my-community-project/>.
- Caretaker period for the NSW Government commences 1st March 2019.

- The Regional Leadership Executive will be meeting on 28th February with the Executive Officer invited to attend to promote RAMJO priorities.
- The Snowy Hydro regional funding focus areas include: water security, rail and road passenger transport connectivity, improving freight linkages, digital connectivity across regional NSW, activating regional locations for business investment (investment concierge service and special activation precincts).
<https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/development/why-sydney-and-nsw/regional-nsw>

RESOLVED that the Board received and noted the update from James Bolton, Director Riverina Murray at DPC.

AGENDA ITEM 7 – CHAIRPERSONS UPDATE – REGIONAL CITIES NSW MEETING

The Chairperson provided an update to the Board regarding his attendance at the Regional Cities NSW meeting. Deputy Premier did not attend however the executive was elected with Cr Col Murray as Chair and Cr Kevin Mack as Deputy Chair. The MOU between the Regional Cities Committee and the NSW Government was not yet signed.

RESOLVED that the Board received and noted the update from the Chairperson.

AGENDA ITEM 8 – PHIL TOWNSEND – MURRAY DARLING BASIN AUTHORITY

SENIOR ECONOMIST – SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF THE BASIN PLAN

Phil Townsend provided a presentation with data demonstrated varied historical information relating to water. It also offered information breakdown by Council. The presentation is attached, with the key points being:

- Census data was the main point of information: 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016.
- Irrigated agriculture is critically important in this community
- 10,000 parcels of water were recovered by the Commonwealth Government via purchase and infrastructure. The water recovery was initially designed to occur over 9 years, but the vast majority of the purchase was undertaken over 2 years. This has impacted the community at a more acute rate.
- Models were designed to pick up when socio economic factors change and by how much they change, and how that relates to water recovery.
- All data and models will be released publicly in the coming months and will be able to be accessed and used by Local Government.
- There were some anomalies that showed through the data, such as in 2014 and 2015 when water usage dropped well below allocation. The water was no traded or carried over, but was not used due to lack of confidence, misinformation and/or lack of access to accurate information.
- Queries were raised as to whether the pricing of water aligned with drop off of water usage.
- Lack of mobility of capital and labour further intensifies impacts of water recovery.
- Questions were raised as to how the farmers were being informed of the water situation throughout 2013 and onwards and whether they would have sold if they had access to accurate information. Concerns were raised as to who this responsibility falls to and whether Rural Financial Advisors were updated with the most accurate and recent information so that they in turn can best advise farmers.
- Berrigan / Finley were in the top four most severely affected communities. It is likely non-agricultural sectors will be most impacted (such as accommodation and retail) and the impact was further emphasised with many service providers moving, or choosing to base themselves out of Tocumwal.
- Surrounding industry, such as rice mills and grain suppliers are also suffering secondary impacts.
- Without adaptive capacity, institutional reformation, entrepreneurial spirit and engaging those over 45 years of age in the community, the future for communities such as Berrigan and Finley remains uncertain. Additionally, flexible, efficient and opportunistic farming will best ensure a future for farmers to manage the peaks and flows of water prices.
- Traditionally, water prices have fallen sharply at the end of February each year. Farmers could try to buy at that point in the cycle instead of watching the market or relying on brokers.

- The Basin Plan is up for full review in 2024.

RESOLVED that the Board receive and note the presentation from Phil Townsend of the MDBA.

AGENDA ITEM 9 – WATER PAPERS AND RAMJO POSITION DISCUSSION

The Board engaged in a discussion relating to the release of the multiple water papers and reports in the past 3 months.

RESOLVED that RAMJO would:

1. **Task the RAMJO Water Security Sub-Committee with identifying knowledge gaps, consulting subject matter experts when/if needed and creating a definitive RAMJO position on the future of water in our region.**
2. **Ensure the Water Security Sub-Committee remains focussed on driving out progress in matters relating to improving water security.**
3. **Create common objectives in line with the Statement of Strategic Priorities via the RAMJO Water Security Sub-Committee, and based on priorities identified by each individual Council.**
4. **Make use of our strength as a Joint Organisation, including identifying opportune forums for lobbying (including MDBA, Murray Darling Basin Ministerial Council, Murray Darling Association, Water NSW).**

AGENDA ITEM 11 – ANITA MCRAE – PRIMARY HEALTH NETWORK (PHN)

“EMPOWERING OUR COMMUNITIES” DROUGHT ASSISTANCE FUNDING

Commonwealth Government is providing support in the form of community grants for mental health to address immediate needs and to foster longer term recovery and resilience. The program is known as “Empowering Our Communities” and provides funding for community orientated wellbeing activities and training, or workforce capability development projects.

The Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network (PHN) is managing a Steering Committee focused on drought response across much of the RAMJO community, with membership from a broad range of stakeholders including RAMJO and REROC EOs. There are three levels of grant funding available, with a maximum of \$30,000 per grant available.

Guidance, eligibility and further information can be found here: <https://mphn.org.au/drought-support>

PHN will be doing a road show in the region to promote the grants, and have identified the Griffith (4th March), Moulamein, Hay, Finley, Urana, Narrandera and Deniliquin communities as the priority.

It should be noted that there are also apps around mental health being developed, including Stay Strong and Rural Financial Aid. In addition, there is a National Drought Taskforce led by Major General Stephen Day focussed on workforce upskilling in response to drought. This includes individual community members (or Council staff) undertaking training to be able to identify those in need of counselling services and to prevent suicide. Please see the link for Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) training: <https://lifespansmurrumbidgee.org.au/>

RESOLVED: that the Board receive and note the information from PHN, including the Drought Response community health funding and upskilling training.

AGENDA ITEM 12 – EXECUTIVE OFFICER UPDATE ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SUB-COMMITTEES UNDER THE RAMJO STATEMENT OF STRATEGIC REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Consideration was given to the confirmation of membership on the Sub-Committees. The Executive Officer provided an update to the Board of the recommendations from the General Managers’ Meeting, including that a clear set of governing principles be provided to the working groups to ensure their operation in line with RAMJO Board expectations. This includes:

- Statement of Expectations
- Terms of Reference
- Secretarial support being provided by the host Council

The General Managers' meeting also recommended that the Sub-Committee use their first meeting as a scoping opportunity to further identify necessary stakeholders or subject matter experts.

RESOLVED that the Board noted the Sub-Committee membership and the Executive Officer will draft a Statement of Expectations and Terms of Reference.

(Moved Cr Bourke and seconded Cr Dal Broi)

AGENDA ITEM 13 – PROFESSIONAL OFFICER GROUPS UPDATE

The Board considered the verbal updates and attached minutes of the following RAMJO Working Groups:

- Engineers Working Group – 6th February 2019
- Development Professionals Working Group – 7th February 2019
- Procurement Group: Executive Officer reported that the Chair position was vacant and that the EO was willing to take on the role of Chairing that Group to ensure the group continues in identifying and realising procurement opportunities.

RESOLVED that the minutes and related recommendations are noted and endorsed.

(Moved Cr Maytom and Cr Dal Broi)

AGENDA ITEM 14 – GRANT FUNDING UPDATE

The Board received an update relating to the successful application of RAMJO and Wagga City Council (combined) for the EPA Contaminated Land Grant to map and managed Underground Petroleum Storage Systems (UPSS). RAMJO will work in cooperation with REROC, but will manage their own area and share learnings, templates and other resources and monitor progress.

Opportunities for some Councils to pool funding received for Crown Land Management will be discussed via a working group which is being established. Alternatively, a RAMJO working group in the first instance will allow Councils to share templates and other information.

Southern Lights funding appears not to be completed before the election or caretaker period. This creates issues for the larger cities which are due for bulb replacement and may have implications for the total bulb rebate.

RESOLVED that the Board noted the successful grant funding.

AGENDA ITEM 15 – RAMJO GENERAL MANAGERS' MEETING

The Board considered the recommendations from the General Managers meeting regarding the motion put forward by Leeton Shire to participate in exploring option to move certain common Council programs to the cloud. Des Bilske offered insight into issues faced by Murray River Council relating to connectivity and inability to access material when service matters arise. The ongoing feasibility of this system, as well as connectivity issues should become evident during the 12-month trial.

Other opportunities are also able to be explored relating to joint macro mapping projects for transport, hospitals, schools, digital connectivity, roads and water.

RESOLVED that the Board endorses RAMJO Councils participating in the 12 month funded pilot and determine its ongoing feasibility at the end of the pilot.

(Moved Cr Pat Bourke and seconded Cr Paul Maytom)

AGENDA ITEM 16 – GENERAL BUSINESS

The Mayor of Narrandera, Cr Neville Kschenka, reported on a meeting held with NSW Police regarding lack of policing staff in the Council district. In addition, it has been reported that Griffith, Wagga and surrounding towns are also having trouble attracting police officers in numbers sufficient to manage policing matters.

RESOLVED that the Executive Officer will send a letter to the relevant NSW Police Superintendent requesting an explanation as to why police numbers are diminishing in our region, and an understanding of the plan to back-fill long term vacancies due to personal or long service leave.

Brett Stonestreet also raised a query regarding the invoicing to RAMJO for Councils for 2018 – 2019, as well as the final invoice for the roll up of RAMROC funds into RAMJO. It was advised that all other Councils had paid their RAMROC funds and only Griffith was outstanding.

RESOLVED that the Executive Officer will send the appropriate invoice to Griffith for the roll-up of the RAMROC funds, as well as the invoices for each Council for 2018-2019 RAMJO membership.

The Executive Officer raised a query as to whether the Board would support a scoping project into Fuel Tax Credit claims to ensure that Councils have been claiming appropriately, as well as an ongoing interface that assists with real time claiming and compliance to the most recent legislation.

RESOLVED that the Board supports the Executive Officer scoping the project opportunity via the Procurement Working Group and report back to the Board.

There being no further business, the RAMJO Board meeting concluded at 2:30 pm.