



*Murray Darling*  
**WETLANDS**

# ANNUAL REPORT

**2011 – 2012**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### OUR VISION:

Community understanding, caring and rehabilitation of wetland environments.

### OUR MISSION:

Restoring wetlands of the Murray-Darling Basin and improving the management of wetlands throughout the catchments by linking community involvement with best scientific understanding.

### OUR VALUES:

- ◆ *INNOVATION* – creative thinking encourages opportunities.
- ◆ *ACCOUNTABILITY & TRANSPARENCY* - responsible and open decision making and sound financial management.
- ◆ *EQUITY* - appreciation of environmental, social and economic situations across the Murray-Darling Basin.
- ◆ *INTEGRITY* - responsive and reliable in all our actions, and respectful of community opinions and issues.
- ◆ *COMMUNITY FOCUSED* - engaging and empowering our communities in environmental solutions.
- ◆ *COMMITMENT* – a community based organisation committed to wetland restoration.

### HISTORY

Murray Darling Wetlands Ltd. was established in 2009 as an initiative of the NSW Murray Wetlands Working Group Inc. The NSW Murray Wetlands Working Group is a corporate member of the company.

The company is a not-for-profit organisation registered under the Australian Securities and Investments Commission as a charity. It has a Board of Directors and members from the wider community, including scientists, landholders, conservationists, Murray Darling Association and The Murray-Darling Freshwater Research Centre. It has Deductible Gift Recipient Status and is registered on the Australian Commonwealth Government Register of Environmental Organisations.

Company practices are managed through Company Policies on OH and S, Equal Opportunity, Risk Management, Code of Ethics and Proper Practice, Conflicts of Interest, Deed of Agreement and Financial Delegations, Confidentiality, Membership Privacy, Project Assessment/Project Governance.

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**Board of Murray Darling Wetlands Ltd.**

Mr Howard Jones, Chair.

Mrs Judy Frankenberg, Deputy Chair

Mr Barrie MacMillan, Company Secretary

Mr Roger Good

Dr Ben Gawne

Mr Vin Byrnes

Ms Kathy Ridge

**Staff**

CEO: Dr Deborah Nias

Program Manager: Ms Rhonda Sinclair

Project Officer: Mrs Sarah Ning

**Registered Business Office**

491 Smollett Street Albury NSW 2640

**ABN**

50 137 010 658

**Auditor**

Mr Dougald Frederick (Albury WHK)

**Insurance**

Association Liability Insurance through Vero Profin.

**Directors Meetings**

Four Directors meetings were held during 2011-2012.

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## Our conservation goals

- Promote and implement ecologically sound management of Murray-Darling Basin wetlands to optimise their environmental values.
- Promote the sustainable utilisation of wetlands and water resources.

Specifically, we shall:

- Restore and improve the ecological health of floodplain wetlands along the southern Murray-Darling Basin, including the headwaters of the Great Dividing Range; the floodplains and the rain fed wetlands (not connected to rivers).

We shall do this through:

- Facilitating greater community awareness of wetland values and management requirements in the Murray-Darling Basin wetlands.
- Utilising the latest research and best management practices to protect and restore Murray-Darling Basin wetlands.
- Developing functional links with other wetland and river management organisations.
- Developing direct community involvement in cooperative rehabilitation projects for the Murray-Darling Basin wetlands in cooperation with government agencies and key land managers.
- Identifying sources of funding and seeking sponsorship for implementing wetland programs in the Murray-Darling Basin wetlands.
- Promoting management-oriented research and recognition of research priorities for the Murray-Darling Basin wetlands throughout the Murray, Murrumbidgee and lower Darling River catchments.
- Expanding interstate liaison and cooperation by fostering links with other agencies and wetland rehabilitation organisations.
- Recognising the importance of local and regional landscape management and private wetlands, by taking a systems approach.

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## 1.0

## MAJOR ACHEIVEMENTS FOR 2011-2012

- Commencement of a two- year project to improve carbon storage in wetlands, project to be managed by Murray CMA with funding provided by the Australian Government Biodiversity Fund.
- Continuation of the Carrs, Cappitts and Bunberoo Creeks system project, in addition working on a partnership project with Lower Murray Darling CMA to investigate engineering options of the system to improve water management for environmental purposes.
- Commencement of a partnership project with Lower Murray Darling CMA to investigate future options for potential water regime options and management of Bottle Bend.
- A Water Trust Alliance Workshop was held in Canberra in December 2011, in conjunction with Healthy Rivers Australia and the Australian River Restoration Centre, to investigate the role of Water Trusts. Attendees included Mr Craig Knowles (Chair, MDBA), MDBA, Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, State Agencies from SA, NSW and Victoria, Australian Conservation Foundation, private irrigators and landholders, Bush Heritage Australia, CSIRO, La Trobe University and Water for Nature (SA).
- Continued representation to the NSW Environmental Water Advisory Group for the Murray and Lower Darling.
- Chair and CEO travel to USA to investigate the role of Water Trusts in the Pacific northwest states and the potential for Water Trusts in the Murray-Darling Basin.
- 20th Anniversary Celebration of the NSW Murray Wetlands Working Group held at Wonga Wetlands on 26 April.
- Successful presentations/attendance at various meetings and public fora advocating community-based approach to water management.
- Establishing the Murray Darling Wetlands Ltd. Business Plan 2012-2015.
- First YouTube video on *Life Flowing Back Into Wetlands* uploaded; with private landowners talking about environmental watering.
- Commenced editing for reprint of A5 booklet, *Wetlands Watch*.
- Representation on Project Steering Committee for Lock 8 and 9 Weir Pool Manipulation.

Dear Members

Well, another year has passed for MDW Ltd. and as this Annual Report shows, we are continuing to achieve many of our objectives from the 2011-2014 Strategic Plan. We have several new projects, new staff and a new draft Business Plan (with thanks to Leonie Burrows and all who contributed). We are also in dialogue with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder regarding potential wetland sites. The Company has also secured some consultancy work in the Lower Murray Darling CMA region, looking at issues around coal seam gas and coal mines.

We have also released a video on YouTube where some of the landholders we have worked with over the years talk about environmental flows and what it has meant to them. Thanks to film maker Tyler Freeman Smith from Free Range Multimedia and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority for assistance with funding.

We welcome two new staff, Rhonda Sinclair (Program Manager) and Sarah Ning (Project Officer) to the Company. Rhonda is busy working on the Lower Murray Darling CMA projects, assisting Deborah with investigating options for the future of Bottle Bend and scoping out the cost of improving water management infrastructure in the Carrs, Cappitts and Bunberoo Creek system. Sarah is working on a Murray CMA project to rehabilitate wetlands and improve carbon storage.

Welcome to our new Director, Kathy Ridge, who brings considerable skills, experience and passion to our group.

A highlight of the year was my trip to USA to see first-hand how community-based Water Trusts operate in the northwest states. Water Trusts could play a very valuable role in the future of the Murray-Darling Basin, a subject we also explored at a very interesting and successful workshop held in Canberra in December, with numerous government organisations attending.

The challenge for us, as I see it, is to do what we have always done well - fill in the gaps between the big players and work in the wetland sites that are often overlooked such as sites on private property.

May I say well done to Deb and Rhonda for another good year. Thank you to the Board and in particular, Barrie MacMillan as our Secretary. And as always, we are indebted to our families for their support and understanding.

**Howard Jones**

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## 3.0

## REPORT ON STRATEGIC PLAN

Murray Darling Wetlands Ltd. established a Strategic Plan in March 2011 (2011-2014).

**This Annual Report is an internal document reporting directly against the Strategic Plan.**

The Strategic Plan sets out three main goals:

1. **COORDINATING/MANAGING WETLANDS RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT** - We aim to improve the condition and status of Murray-Darling Basin wetlands.
2. **OUR INNOVATION FOCUS** - We will maintain and further develop our innovation focus.
3. **OUR ORGANISATION** - We will continue to be an effective and viable organisation.

### GOAL

#### COORDINATING/MANAGING WETLANDS RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT

**We aim to improve the condition and status of Murray-Darling Basin wetlands**

#### Objectives

- 1.1 Identify and establish geographic areas of influence in the Murray-Darling Basin.
- 1.2 Develop a business model to deliver improved wetland management across the Murray-Darling Basin.

#### Objective 1.1 | Actions

##### Develop mutually beneficial alliances to assist in project identification

- ✓ Partnership begun with Lower Murray Darling CMA on two projects: Carrs, Cappitts and Bunberoo Creeks system rehabilitation project; and Bottle Bend Future Options.
- ✓ Discussions with Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) to identify project opportunities in Lower Murray Darling region, resulting in MDBA funded project to identify fish communities in Carrs, Cappitts and Bunberoo Creeks system (work undertaken by The Murray-Darling Freshwater Research Centre).
- ✓ Discussions with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to manage water in the southern Murray-Darling Basin.



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### **Implement a minimum of three (3) projects within the 3 year strategic planning period**

- ✓ Commencement of a two-year project to improve carbon storage in wetlands, project to be managed by Murray CMA with funding provided by the Australian Government Biodiversity Fund.
- ✓ Carrs, Cappitts and Bunberoo Creeks system partnership project with Lower Murray Darling CMA to investigate engineering options.
- ✓ Bottle Bend Future Options study, in partnership with Lower Murray Darling CMA, to investigate potential water regime options and management of Bottle Bend.

### **Objective 1.2 | Actions**

#### **Develop a business model to deliver improved wetland management across the Murray-Darling Basin**

- ✓ MDW will need to have a mix of funding options including:
  1. Project funds for wetland restoration projects sought through Government funding bodies
  2. Project funds for wetland restoration projects sought through partnerships with Government agencies
  3. Consultancies, where appropriate
  4. Donations
  5. Sponsorships
  6. Use of assets, such as pumps for hire
  7. Sale of Atlas books and Wetlands Watch
  8. Bank interest

#### **Engage with key stakeholders in the development of a realistic business model**

- ✓ Drafting of Business Plan underway which will identify preferred model for operation.

#### **Develop and implement a MDW Stakeholder Management Plan**

- ✓ Plan being developed in conjunction with Business Plan.

#### **Develop a realisable financial plan to support the preferred business model.**

- ✓ Being developed as part of the Business Plan.

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**GOAL**  
**OUR INNOVATION FOCUS**

**We will maintain and further develop our innovation focus**

**Objectives**

- 2.1 Develop innovative collaborative relationships.
- 2.2 Develop innovative responses to changing environments.

**Objective 2.1 | Action**

**MDW assume a leading and proactive role in the Water Trust Alliance**

- ✓ MDW, in partnership with Healthy Rivers Australia and the Australian River Restoration Centre, convened a Water Trust Alliance workshop in Canberra, November 2011.

**Objective 2.2 | Actions**

**Develop and implement an innovative and flexible community engagement strategy/plan**

- ✓ Marketing Plan being considered
- ✓ Facebook page begun
- ✓ New website being developed
- ✓ Video produced with FreeRange Multimedia and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority to highlight views of landholders and environmental flows.

**Investigate the implementation of a MDW Environmental Water Fund**

- ✓ Discussions held with Healthy Rivers Australia and Waterfind to consider issues involved and potentials for water funds.

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**GOAL**

**OUR ORGANISATION**

**We will continue to be an effective and viable organisation**

**Objectives**

- 3.1 Provide transparent and effective governance processes.
- 3.2 Ensure longer term financial sustainability.

**Objective 3.1 | Actions**

**Undertake annual reviews of operational arrangements and key achievements**

- ✓ 2010-2011 Annual report written and distributed.

**Determine annually a cash budget for the financial year ahead and compare actuals against budget**

- ✓ Developed for 2012-2013 financial year.

**Establish simple and transparent succession planning processes for Board /staff.**

- ✓ Remuneration Committee established and staff structure implemented which provides career pathway through the company.

**Objective 3.2 | Actions**

**Develop and implement a professional marketing and sponsorship plan**

- ✓ Professional marketing firm approached for discussion.
- ✓ Develop and implement a communication and promotional campaign around Murray Darling Wetlands' DGR status.

**Investigate opportunities for development of a consulting arm for MDW**

- ✓ Consultancy companies approaching MDW to work on projects in the Lower Murray Darling CMA region; one successful project implemented.

**Develop and implement a policy for fee for information and advice services**

- ✓ Pricing structure established by Remuneration Committee.

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## 4.0

## CONTACT

For further information, please contact:

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