



Murray Darling
Wetlands
Working Group

ANNUAL REPORT
2022 - 2023

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Ltd. acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land we work, live and learn on and pays its respects and gratitude to Elders past, present and future.

Staff

01
CEO
Dr. Deborah Nias

Staff
02
Sascha Healy, Senior Environmental
Water Manager - Mildura

03
Sarah Ning, Environmental Water
Manager - Albury

04
Jane White, Environmental Water
Manager - Katunga

05
Simon Morris, Communications
Manager - Melbourne



02



04



01



03



Since 1992 the Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group has delivered hundreds of projects across thousands of hectares of wetlands, involving hundreds of people in the Murray-Darling Basin.

Pioneers in water management for wetlands since 2000, we have delivered over 80000 Megalitres to more than 200 wetlands, improving habitat for birds, fish, frogs, insects, lizards, mammals, trees, plants and many endangered and vulnerable species.

The key to our success has been collaboration with many stakeholders including irrigators, NGOs, government agencies, businesses, Aboriginal and community groups.

We know the solution to addressing wetland health in the Murray-Darling Basin lies with people working together.



I am happy to present the annual report of the Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Ltd for the year 2022-2023.

The last year has seen some very positive changes to our board with Jamie Woods and Jiarra Atkinson joining us. Jamie is a well-respected Nari Nari man who brings current water and land management experience along with his cultural knowledge as the senior manager on Gayini. Jiarra is a Bangerang woman who works in NRM and has strong cultural roots and brings a refreshing energetic perspective to the board. These additions have consolidated MDWWG's goal to walk with our First Nations people in the cultural water area and their insights and perspectives help guide our actions.

One of MDWWG's founding members and long serving Chair Howard Jones was awarded an Order Australia Medal for service to conservation and the environment in this year's King's birthday awards. Howard is a long-term advocate for wetlands and waterways in particular around the Lower Murray-Darling region and was a key driving force behind our group's success.

Our staff continue to be the power engine of our Group as we expand and grow into new regions. We have been successful in gaining grants from numerous organisations, including:

Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations: Small Grant for First Nations Cultural Water Plan, Nari Nari Tribal Council.

Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources: Emissions Reduction Fund - Threatened Species Action Plan - Priority Species. Supporting the Plains Wanderer on the Murrumbidgee Floodplain.

NSW Department of Primary Industry and Environment, Healing Country. Cultural Water Plans - Healing Country First Nations.

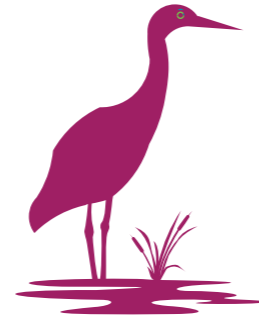
Western Local Land Services: Small Grant for development and implementation of interpretive signage along the floodplain of the lower Murray and Darling Rivers.

And finally, our community engagement also continues to grow as we work across the landscape, showing many people the beauty and wonder of our precious wetlands.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our small, but effective organisation!

Ian Davidson

Riverspace



Dear Members,

Another year has passed already! And what an incredible year it has been. The massive floods across the Murray-Darling Basin during 2022-23 provided many opportunities for large wetlands that had not been wet for decades, to refill and bring new life to the regions.

The floods also meant we had a real challenge to do our usual watering of wetlands as nature had already done it for us! We showed our ability to adapt quickly though, and still managed to contribute to improving biodiversity and wetland habitat.

We partnered with private landholders, NGO's, sporting clubs and state agencies to deliver ~678 ML in 2022-2023 to 12 individual wetlands in NSW and VIC. A diversity of wetland types covering an area of 188 hectares were inundated. Working closely with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder a further ~4512 ML was used to contribute to larger watering programs.

Now as we head into a drying period and a possible prolonged drought, these wetland sites will be more resilient and able to bounce back quickly in the future when the rains begin again.

I am always in awe of the people who work for our Group. Our staff continue to be passionate and dedicated to our vision, and our Board goes from strength to strength as we welcome First Nations Directors, Jamie Woods and Jiarra Atkinson. I am very much looking forward to continuing my own learning journey with Jamie and Jiarra.

During the year, we also launched the revamped and updated website Riverspace.au. This website showcases the wetlands that receive water donated by the Murray Darling Basin Balanced Water Fund to the Environmental Water Trust, which we then manage. Featuring an interactive map, you can read more about the real impact this innovative program is bringing to people and wetlands.

As always, I extend my personal thanks to the families of all our Board members and staff, as they provide so much support to their partners, mothers and fathers. Without them, none of this is possible.

Thank you,

Deborah Nias
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Despite the prolonged and significant flooding within the Murray-Darling Basin, the MDWWG partnered with private landholders, NGO's, sporting clubs and state agencies to use water to make the most of the wet conditions delivering ~678 ML in 2022-2023 to 12 individual wetlands in NSW and VIC. A diversity of wetland types covering an area of 188 hectares were inundated. Working closely with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder a further ~4512 ML was used to contribute to larger watering programs.

Foraging and breeding habitat was created and maintained for 59 waterbird species including 13 federal or state-listed species including Australasian bittern, Freckled duck and Blue-billed duck.

Eleven species of frog including the nationally vulnerable southern bell frog were identified in 2022-23.

Water delivery also supported germination, flowering and dispersal of wetland plants with 13 rare and threatened plants recorded for the first time in 2022-23.

Recovery efforts for the nationally endangered Murray hardhead fish which has been supported through water delivery partnerships with the Commonwealth and NSW government in previous years has seen them experience breeding and dispersal opportunities during the 2022-23 floods. Surveys by DPI Fisheries have indicated that fish have moved into other wetlands across the Wingillie Wetlands Complex.

At Gayini, our monitoring work with Nari Nari Tribal Council through the Supporting the Plains Wanderer on the Murrumbidgee Floodplain program spotted ~12 individuals including males, females and juveniles.

The year 2022-23 also saw the development of our new communications strategy and review of our brand, including the redevelopment of our two websites MDWWG and Riverspace.

Foraging and breeding habitat was created and maintained for 59 waterbird species including nationally endangered species such as the Freckled duck.

CREDIT: © Chris Tzaros, Birds, Bush and Beyond



In 2022-2023 to 12 individual wetlands in NSW and VIC

~678 ML

used to contribute to larger watering programs.

~4512 ML

Species of frog including the nationally vulnerable Southern bell frog were identified in 2022-23

11

rare and threatened plants recorded for the first time in 2022-23.

13

At Gayini, our monitoring work with Nari Nari Tribal Council spotted the critically endangered Plains wanderer on the Murrumbidgee Floodplains including males, females and juveniles.

12



Innovation – creative thinking and encouraging opportunities.

Accountability and transparency – responsible and open decision-making and sound financial management.

Equity – appreciation of environmental, social, economic and cultural issues across the Murray-Darling Basin.

Integrity – responsive and reliable in all our actions and respectful of community opinions and issues.

Community focussed – engaging and empowering basin communities in environmental solutions.

Commitment – a community-based organisation committed to wetland restoration.

- Facilitating greater community awareness of wetland values and management requirements in Murray-Darling Basin wetlands.
- Utilising the latest research and best management practices to protect and restore wetlands.
- Developing functional links with other wetland and river management organisations.
- Encouraging community involvement in cooperative rehabilitation projects of wetlands in cooperation with government agencies and key land managers.
- Identifying sources of funding and seeking sponsorship for implementing wetland programs for basin wetlands.
- Promoting management-oriented research and recognition of research priorities for 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.

Our vision.

Community understanding, caring and rehabilitation of wetland environments.

Our mission.

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

Our conservation goals.

- Promote and implement sound management of Murray-Darling Basin wetlands to optimise their environmental values.
- Promote the sustainable use 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; basin floodplains and rain-fed wetlands (not connected to rivers).



Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations: Small Grant for First Nations Cultural Water Plan, Nari Nari Tribal Council. Grant amount: \$10,000 ex GST.

Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources: Emissions Reduction Fund - Threatened Species Action Plan - Priority Species. Supporting the Plains Wanderer on the Murrumbidgee Floodplain: Grant amount \$193,800 ex GST.

NSW Department of Primary Industry and Environment, Healing Country. Cultural Water Plans - Healing Country First Nations. Grant amount \$18,000 ex GST.

Western Local Land Services: Small Grant for development and implementation of interpretive signage along the floodplain of the lower Murray and Darling Rivers. Grant amount: \$8,600 ex GST.

\$230,400

As at 30 June 2023, the Company Board comprised the following directors:

The Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Ltd. is an Australian Public Company limited by guarantee with the Australian Securities & Investments Commission (Australian Company Number: 137 010 658).

The company was registered under the Corporations Act 2001 on 8 May 2009. The Working Group is governed by a board of directors with experience in water and natural resource management; farming; irrigation; community engagement; legal; finance; economic; science and governance.



NAME	POSITION	BACKGROUND	DATE OF SERVICE
Mr Ian Davidson Wangaratta, VIC	Chair	Natural resource management	2013 - current
Ms Kathryn Ridge Sydney, NSW	Deputy Chair	Lawyer	2012 - current
Ms Judith Frankenberg Howlong, NSW	Board member	Beef farmer, ecologist (retired)	2009 - current
Mr John Pettigrew Shepparton, VIC	Board member	Irrigation and horticultural industries (retired)	2016 - current
Mr David Harriss PSM Narooma, NSW	Board member	Public service (water and natural resource management)	2018 - current
Mr Nick Lilley Melbourne, VIC	Board member	Corporate finance professional, renewable energy	2016 - current
Mr Adrian Wells Leneva, VIC	Board member	Education, community engagement, communication	2016 - current
Mr James Forbes Sydney, NSW	Board member	Philanthropy, fundraising	2019 - current
Mr Jamie Woods Hay, NSW	Board member	Natural resource management, water delivery	2021 - current
Ms Jiarra Atkinson	Board member	Environmental conservation, cultural heritage	2023 - current

Board meetings

Four ordinary board meetings were held during 2022-23. The number of meetings and attendance by each of the company's directors are set out in Appendix 1.

2022 Annual General Meeting
The company's annual general meeting was held in Shepparton, Victoria on November 30th 2022.

Chief Executive Officer
Dr Deborah Nias continued as the company's Chief Executive Officer during the year and continued as the board's Company Secretary.

The Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group is a company limited by guarantee and is required to adhere to stringent governance and reporting procedures.

The Working Group has a strong financial governance system in place that includes:

- A Finance Audit Risk and Governance Committee comprising three board members skilled in financial management. The committee reviews financial reports quarterly, ensures accountability for project expenditure, has an internal audit process, and oversees the independent financial audit.

- Working Group policies that govern the use of all funds.
- The Working Group engages an independent external bookkeeper to maintain account records, reports BAS, controls payroll and liaises with the auditor.
- The Working Group is independently audited each year.
- The Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Public Fund reports annually to the Department of the Environment and Energy, detailing how money (and/or property) donated to the Public Fund is used, and how this contributes to the Working Group's principal purpose.

During 2022-23, members of the Finance Audit Risk and Governance Committee were Ms Judith Frankenberg, Ms Kathryn Ridge and Mr Nick Lilley.

The annual financial accounts are not included in the annual report. Copies of audited financial statements are available to relevant organisations upon request.

RECONNECTION OF WETLANDS IN THE MURRAY AND BAAKA RIVERS.

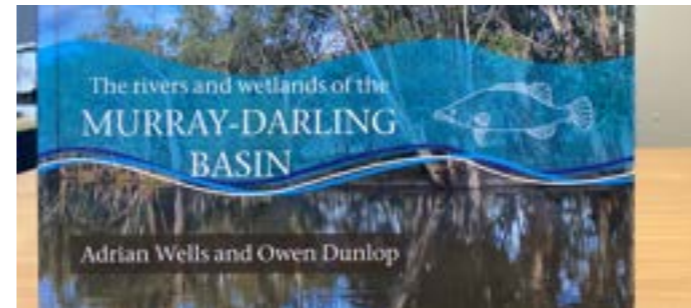
With funding from the Ian Potter Foundation, a capacity building project has allowed the MDWWG to grow our water delivery program through working with private landholders and key stakeholders to expand the network of wetlands that reconnect with the Murray and Baaka Rivers. During the second year of this three-year project, new partnerships have developed including with First Nations groups to deliver water to wetlands, supporting their Healthy Country Plans.

During 2022-23 five wetland sites were watered and monitored in far-west NSW and Victoria, re-establishing cultural connections, values and learning on Country. MDWWG also provided their expertise by hosting several vegetation monitoring workshops with the Indigenous Rangers from Nari Nari Tribal Council (NNTC) on Country at Gayini.

This project has resulted in improvement to the health of black box, river red gum, and lignum vegetation communities, and an increase in the number of waterbirds. An increase in suitable habitat for southern bell frog and Murray hardhead has enabled significant recruitment of these threatened species.

We have so far observed 59 species of waterbirds, 211 native wetland plant species and 11 frog species in response to the water that has been delivered through this project.

The Ian Potter Foundation supported three Indigenous people from different nations to attend the Australasian Bittern Conservation Summit in Leeton January 2023, and obtain CASA certification to fly drones in February 2023 to assist with wetland monitoring and management.



In 2021, the Jane Goodall Institute in Sydney commissioned the Petaurus Education Group in Albury to write a book for primary school students on the rivers and wetlands of the Murray-Darling Basin. The book, *The Rivers and Wetlands of the Murray-Darling Basin*, was completed in mid-2023 and 4,000 copies were distributed to primary schools across Australia along with teacher notes and classroom activities. The book gave the Wetlands Working Group a valuable opportunity to reach a younger audience about the importance of wetlands as well as community initiatives in restoring wetlands in the basin. Additional copies of the book will be donated to libraries along the Murray, Murrumbidgee and Darling catchments. The Ian Potter Foundation contributed funds to help prepare the book for publication.

MDWWG engaged Petaurus Education Group to help host a Wentworth Public School Gala Day in November 2022 with a focus on the environment and wetlands. Eighty students ranging from year 3 to year 6 from several local schools were involved. MDWWG delivered activities with a focus on frogs, waterbirds, and wetlands. Other presenters included DPI - Fisheries (fish), Enviro Edu (wildlife) and local Indigenous Elders (cultural values and history of local area). Many more educational events are planned for 2023-24.

With thanks to the Ian Potter Foundation, MDWWG for the first time appointed a Communications Manager. This role has been essential in renewing our online presence and reporting, leading the way for further investment in Murray-Darling Basin wetlands.



The MDWWG delivered 678 ML of Environmental Water Trust donation water to 12 wetlands across NSW and Victoria. Due to the prolonged flooding and subsequent inability to deliver water in 2022-23, 4512 ML of EWT water was transferred to the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH) to contribute to larger external watering programs in 2023-24.

An area of 188 hectares encompassing a diversity of wetland types including ephemeral creeks, lagoons, billabongs, meadows, and depressions was inundated in 2022-23 using EWT water. Many of these wetlands supported threatened species including Murray hardyhead, Southern bell frog, Australasian bittern, Freckled duck and Brolga.

Bear's and Haw's Wetlands were watered for the first time in 2022-23 in partnership with landholders and Wetlands Revival Trust as part of their Future Drought Fund Grant.

Key partnerships between MDWWG and First Nations People continued in 2022-23 including practical support of Indigenous Rangers to obtain Certificate III in Conservation and Ecosystem Management via TAFE NSW, co-design of threatened species monitoring and management grant applications, and the co-development of Cultural Water Plans.



environmental
water
trust

The prolonged unregulated flooding experienced in the Murray, Murrumbidgee, Goulburn, Ovens, Loddon, Campaspe and lower Baaka Rivers during spring and summer 2022-23 meant that many of our wetlands were inundated via unregulated flooding or high rainfall. This meant that water delivery was delayed, or didn't proceed in 2022-23. While these events provided many challenges to communities across the landscape and to our proposed water delivery program, they have resulted in large dispersal and breeding of plants and animals including for threatened species. Populations of Murray hardyhead located at Wingillie Station dispersed across the landscape where the delivery of water has occurred since 2016 for a diversity of wetlands.

During 2022-23 several new wetland sites have become part of our expanding portfolio. The MDWWG included a new and large wetland complex in far west Victoria known as Bullock Swamp. The wetland 250 hectares in size is in the Mallee Catchment Management Authority region and is the first site in their region that we have incorporated into our watering program. Weston's Wetland in north-west Victoria received water for the first time in autumn 2023 with 1,000s of waterbirds including Brolga making the most of the shallow wetland's extended inundation following unregulated flooding. Bear's Wetland (south-west of Kerang Victoria), and Haw's Wetland (near Yando Victoria), in partnership with WRT, were also watered for the first time in 2022-23 in partnership with Wetland Revival Trust and landholders.

In NSW, at Glencoe Wetland and Wee Week Creek, Southern bell frogs were recorded for the first time. While in Victoria, O'Brien's Wetland continues to support threatened plant species including ridged water-milfoil, stiff groundsel, bush groundsel, fuzzweed and downy pea.



The Bullock Swamp wetland is 250 hectares in size and is located in the Mallee Catchment Management Authority region. It is the first site in their region that we have incorporated into our watering program.

Images from left to right - unregulated flooding events, high rainfall, and water delivery provided unique conditions for significant breeding and dispersal of Southern bell frogs
CREDIT: © Chris Tzaros, Birds, Bush and Beyond; water was delivered for the first time to Weston's Wetland providing suitable habitat for Brolga and nesting Black swans; Bullock Swamp was included in our watering program for the first time in 2022-23 with lignum and black box trees flourishing in response.



Photo caption: Many wandering and breeding Whistling ducks were found at Gayini. CREDIT: © Chris Tzaros, Birds, Bush and Beyond

Photo caption: 100s of Freckled ducks were enjoying the superb conditions at Gayini. CREDIT: © Chris Tzaros, Birds, Bush and Beyond

Saving the Australian painted snipe and other wetland dependent threatened species in Gayini wetlands, 2022-2023 update.

During our 2022-2023 program, through our partnership with Birds, Bush and Beyond (Chris Tzaros wildlife ecologist), waterbird surveys revealed 786 Freckled ducks foraging at several wetlands on Gayini. They are vulnerable in NSW and it is likely that they happily seized the breeding opportunity following the significant flooding and ultimately the great conditions provided in the expansive lignum and goosefoot vegetation communities. Seventeen Australasian bitterns and several Blue-billed ducks were also observed during the survey period.

Whistling ducks were also spotted by Chris Tzaros keen eyes. They were found to be wandering about and breeding at Gayini. They are considered very rare in the Riverina region, normally occurring much further north. They have also rarely been recorded as breeding in the region, so this is a very exciting new record.

These unusual new sightings show the importance of the recent flood events experienced through Gayini for providing habitat and refuge for birds across the Murray-Darling Basin and beyond. This provides us with a greater understanding on how these wetlands are connected within the landscape and how we can best manage them to continue providing habitat for as many species as possible.

The year also saw the production of our new video which captures the beauty of Gayini and some of the people working to save threatened bird species, under the management of the NNTC. The development of four brochures were also completed, they focus on Australasian bittern, Australian painted snipe, Blue-billed duck and Freckled duck.

This project is funded by the NSW Government Environmental Trust and aims to increase habitat for several threatened species at Gayini through careful land and water management by NNTC.



Supporting the Plains-wanderer on the Murrumbidgee floodplain with funding provided from the Commonwealth Environment Restoration Fund, the MDWWG are working with Nari Nari Tribal Council (NNTC) and NSW Government to deliver a 18-month project that aims to restore and rehabilitate suitable habitat to support plains-wanderer populations at Gayini.

They are a small quail-like bird endemic to southern and eastern Australia and lives on open, sparse and grassland type habitat. Listed with an endangered conservation status in NSW they are particularly susceptible to predation by foxes.

The project will:

- design and deliver monitoring and pest management activities in partnership with NNTC River Rangers such as for fox baiting, vegetation assessments, spotlighting, acoustic call recorder deployment and assessment and photo point monitoring; and
- provide training for plains-wanderer characteristics (expanding knowledge on the species), monitoring techniques and fox baiting programs.

Despite flood water cutting access to Gayini from August through to March, it was a busy year with the establishment and seasonal monitoring of 676 bait stations for Plains-wanderer, and further scoping of sites suitable for future stations. Acoustic and remote camera monitoring techniques were utilised throughout the year to assist with monitoring these species.

Working with NNTC surveys during September 2022 discovered 8 individuals including males, females and juveniles, 47 calls were also detected through the acoustic call recorders. During May on another area of the property, NNTC field staff encountered three Plain wanderers (one female and two males).

Led by David Parker from NSW Government and Ian Davidson (ecologist) training with the NNTC river ranger team occurred during the first year of this project to determine suitable habitat and complete vegetation assessments.

These initial sightings and extensive fox baiting program will be expanded through the Commonwealth Environment Restoration Fund (December 2023) and NSW Environmental Trust program 2022-2027, with the positive results achieved so far providing much anticipation on an increasing population.

Photo caption: Plains-wanderers discovered at Gayni provided much excitement for the work achieved to date in rehabilitating suitable habitat for these species. Photo courtesy of Nari Nari Tribal Council





Nari Nari Ranger Crew working on Country

The MDWWG worked closely with the Nari Nari Tribal Council (NNTC) in 2021-22 and 2022-23 to develop The 'First Nations Cultural Water Plan' (water plan) which identifies and establishes cultural water objectives and cultural values for the NNTC.

Water is central to First Nations people as it allows them to connect to country and its plants and animals - Jamie Woods

The purpose of the plan is to be an easily shared guide for the NNTC to work towards cultural water objectives for First Nations people.

The key purpose of the water plan is to:

- identify the cultural water objectives, including;
- cultural targets
- water dependent communities and habitats
- Nari Nari Cultural Landscape – Murrugay areas
- provide cultural values to measure the successful implementation of the plan;
- provide a guide that can be easily shared with partners and the community; and
- inform the development of annual and long-term water plans and priorities.

The plan aims to achieve greater connection to country for first peoples whilst supporting wider ecosystem health. Water managed for culture is key in allowing first peoples to connect to country. Managing water for cultural purposes will further help the landscape to recover and empower first peoples.



Ibis rookery at Gayini

Staff became fully qualified drone pilots after completing a drone training course in February 2023.

The theory training was held at our Albury office with a practical day at Willow Park in Wodonga. We were proud to provide sponsorship for First Nations participants from Bangerang, Nari Nari Tribal Council and Werai Land and Water Aboriginal Corporation.

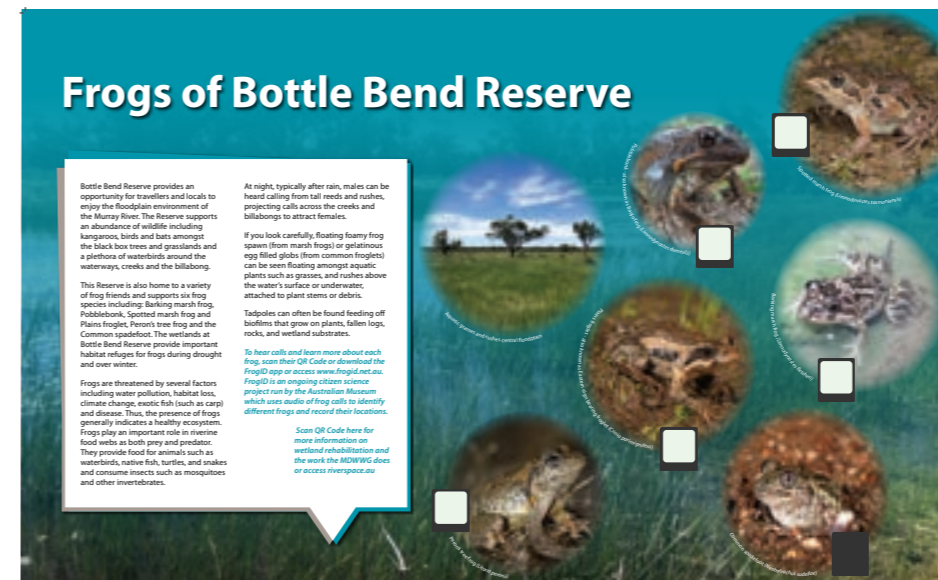
After successfully receiving our remote pilot licence qualifications we are now including the use of drones into our wetland monitoring work. The visual imagery will also enhance our story-telling approach on the results achieved from the work that we do at the many wetland sites across the Murray-Darling Basin.



Drone training for staff and First Nations People at Wodonga in February 2023 provides the skills for additional approaches for wetland management and monitoring.

Through a small grant from Western Local Land Services, interactive signage which feature frogs, their preferred habitat and dietary requirements have been installed at multiple sites along the floodplain of the lower Murray and Baaka Rivers.

Signage was developed specifically for six significant wetland sites including Bottle Bend Reserve, Buronga Wetlands, Darling Anabranche, Thegoa Lagoon, Coomealla Golf Course Lagoons, and the Gol Gol School Immersion Centre. The signage has incorporated QR codes, directing community to the Riverspace and Frog ID websites. The placement of signs provides great exposure to school groups and the wider community.



The Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Public Fund is registered with the Register of Environmental and endorsed as Deductible Gift Recipients by the Australian Taxation Office. As such, donations over \$2 (AUD) to the Fund are tax deductible for the donor.

You can donate directly via our secure website:
mdwwg.com.au/donate/

Or you can donate directly to the Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Public Fund bank account via EFT.

All quoted dollar amounts and transactions are processed as Australian currency (\$AUD). Simply transfer your 100% tax-deductible donation (\$2 or more) to:

Bank: Westpac, Mitcham SA Account Name: Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Public Fund BSB: 035 044 Account Number: 182352

Please use your surname as the reference. For a tax deductible receipt, please email your name and postal address details to: deb.nias@mdwwg.com.au

Cheques, made payable to: Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Public Fund, can be sent to: Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Public Fund PO Box 7016 East Albury NSW 2640

How to contribute to the fund.



Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Ltd (2022) 2021-2022 Annual Report of the Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Ltd, November 2022.

Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Ltd (2023) 2022-23 Annual Environmental Watering Report 2023- 2024.

Borrell A. (2023) Conservation of high priority bittern wetlands in the NSW Riverina through partnerships and environmental water management. Bringing Back the Bunyip Bird – Australasian Bittern Conservation Summit 2023, Leeton NSW.

Healy S.J., Ellis I., Walker J., Wilkies A., (2023). Wingillie Station. Wetlands Australia 37: National wetlands update March 2023.

Salkeld A., Nias D., Friday E., (2023). Murray-Darling Basin Balanced Water Fund. Australian Land Conservation Alliance Unite for Nature Webinar Series Tuesday 30 May.

Ning S. (2023) Working together to maximise environmental, social and cultural outcomes for wetlands. Science Forum 2023, Winton Wetlands VIC.



During the year, the company was supported in its work by the following. We thank them for their valued advice, help and encouragement during 2022–23:

Our valued supporters.

- Aquasave - Nature Glenelg Trust
- Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder
- Gayini Nimmie-Caira Consortium
- Kilter Rural
- Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations
- Nari-Nari Tribal Council
- The Ian Potter Foundation
- NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
- NSW Environmental Trust - Sydney
- OzFish Unlimited
- The Environmental Water Trust
- The Nature Conservancy Australia - Melbourne
- The Nature Conservancy Global Water NSW
- The Ian Potter Foundation
- Trentham Estate Winery - Trentham Cliffs, NSW
- Commonwealth Environmental Water Office - Canberra, ACT
- Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority - Shepparton, VIC
- Goulburn Murray Water - Tatura, VIC
- Hazel L Henry Farmland Nature Refuges (Wingillie Station)
- Jamie McMaster - Yambuna, VIC
- Murray Local Land Services - Deniliquin, NSW
- North East Catchment Management Authority - Wodonga, VIC
- North Central Catchment Management Authority - Huntly, VIC
- NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
- O'Kane family - Burramine, VIC
- Caldwell family - Nathalia, VIC
- Toll family - Gunbower, VIC
- Jim Thompson - Dhurringile, VIC
- Michael O'Brien - Murrabit West, VIC
- Parks Victoria
- Petaurus Education Group Inc - Albury, NSW
- SA Water - Adelaide, SA
- SunRice Australia Pty Ltd.
- Trust for Nature Victoria - Melbourne, VIC
- Victorian Environmental Water Holder - Melbourne, VIC
- Victorian Fisheries Authority - Melbourne, VIC
- Western Local Land Services - Buronga, NSW
- Barkindji Maraura Elders Environment Team
- The Nature Conservancy
- Jo and Don Hearn, Restdown Winery - Thule, NSW
- Watson family - Thule, NSW
- McDonalds family - Thule, NSW
- Wetland Revival Trust - VIC
- Gol Gol Community Reference Group - Gol Gol, NSW
- Bottle Bend Reserve Land Manager- Paringi NSW
- DPI Fisheries - Buronga, NSW
- DPE SoS (EATS) - Albury, NSW
- Charles Sturt University - Thurgoona, NSW
- Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre - Deniliquin, NSW
- Werai Aboriginal Land Council - Moama, NSW
- Mallee Catchment Management Authority - Mildura, VIC
- Western Murray Land Improvement Group - Barham, NSW

The company also thanks the many other private landholders without whom we could not have achieved what we did during the year.

NAME	POSITION	DATE APPOINTED
Dr Deborah Nias	Chief Executive Officer - Adelaide	2009
Sarah Ning	Environmental Water Manager - Albury	2012
Sascha Healy	Senior Environmental Water Manager - Mildura	2021
Jane White	Environmental Water Manager - Katunga	2022
Simon Morris	Communications Manager - Melbourne	2022

People are our biggest resource.

Our employees are the most valuable assets an organisation has. It's their abilities, knowledge, and experience that can't be replaced.

They truly care about our Basin, stakeholders, improving the entire community in which we are involved, and the value of freshwater to the future of Australia.

The directors of Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Ltd. are experienced and dedicated members of the community. They include people with farming, irrigation, legal, community engagement, governance, scientific, financial and conservation backgrounds. Their depth of experience, technical skills and networks is used to guide and manage the Working Group's strategic activities.

IAN DAVIDSON

Ian's background and extensive experience in natural resource management has plenty to offer the Working Group. Since 2002, he has run an independent environmental consultancy company in north-east Victoria, identifying conservation values and assisting land managers to maintain and enhance the environment and those and undertaking various research projects. His clients include local, state and commonwealth governments. Ian's work has included wildlife management issues, research on remnant vegetation and recovery of endangered native birds. He has also worked with Greening Australia, running one of the first fencing incentive programs in Australia.

NICK LILLEY

Nick is a corporate finance professional with over two decades of experience in raising capital and negotiating commercial agreements for renewable energy projects in Australia and internationally. He has experience in the impact investment sector, having worked on the development of the Murray Darling Basin Balanced Water Fund. Nick's focus is on the renewable energy and conservation sectors.

JUDY FRANKENBERG

Judy has been involved with the group since its first meeting in 1992. A retired ecologist with expertise in floodplain and wetland management (and also a farmer at Howlong), Judy maintained her involvement with the group because she saw it as 'worthwhile'. In 2013, she explained that being involved with the group gave her great opportunity to make a difference and do something, not just talk or write about things. Until early-2018, Judy served as deputy chair of the company.

KATHRYN RIDGE

Kathy has a long association with wetlands and water quality. Raised in New Guinea, Ridge developed a life-long commitment to protecting and conserving culture and nature. She began her career as a marine biologist but gained a law degree and started working with Aboriginal elders to protect parts of coastal NSW from mining. In 1999, as executive officer of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW, Kathy began to take a more active interest in inland wetlands and rivers, through member groups Inland Rivers Network and the Coasts and Wetlands Society. She is currently the principal of Ridge and Associates, a legal firm in Sydney with a strong interest in environmental issues.

ADRIAN WELLS

Adrian retired from work in 2015 after 46 years of work in the Murray-Darling Basin in horticultural research and extension; the media; community development; rural education; and Local Government. As part of his jobs, he served on various local, state and commonwealth natural resource management committees and working parties. Adrian has an interest in communication, community engagement and history. Adrian currently chairs the Petaurus Education Group and is a member of the Landcare NSW Executive Committee and State Council.

JOHN PETTIGREW

John has a long history within the Goulburn Valley fruit industry as a grower and director of SPC Ltd. He served on various industry advisory boards and water service committees. In 2002, John was appointed to the boards of Goulburn-Murray Water and the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority. He has a keen interest in the environment and resource management and has extensive water policy experience.

DAVID HARRISS PSM

David joined the board after a long career in the NSW public service. In 1989, Harriss was offered a position as a resource manager in south western NSW after completing a post-graduate qualification in water management.

David was the first chair of the Murray Wetlands Working Group between 1992 and 1995.

At the same time, he rose through the key land and water agency in NSW to become the head of the NSW Office of Water. David retired from the public sector in 2014 and became a consultant.

JAMES FORBES

Prior to joining the Jane Goodall Institute Australia as CEO, James held senior marketing and fundraising roles with the Nature Conservation Trust of NSW, Australian Indigenous Education Foundation, and WWF-Australia. He has been a Senior Associate with Global Philanthropic and a Marketing Advisor with Food Frontier as well as operating a private fundraising consultancy, Forbes Philanthropy & Marketing. James is the co-author of a peer reviewed paper that examined the motivations and barriers of landholders entering into conservation agreements on private property.

JAMIE WOODS

(appointed November 2021)

Jamie is a Nari Nari man living on his Country at Gayini (Nimmie-Caira) in NSW. Jamie is a Nari Nari Tribal Council Delegate, Chair of Mawambul Co Management and member of the Hay Local Aboriginal Land Council Board.

Jamie has extensive experience in water management, including the use of environmental water on Gayini and Toogimbie.

The Nari Nari Tribal Council also owns and manages irrigated farmland, under the regenerative agriculture philosophy.

JIARRA ATKINSON

(appointed November 2023)

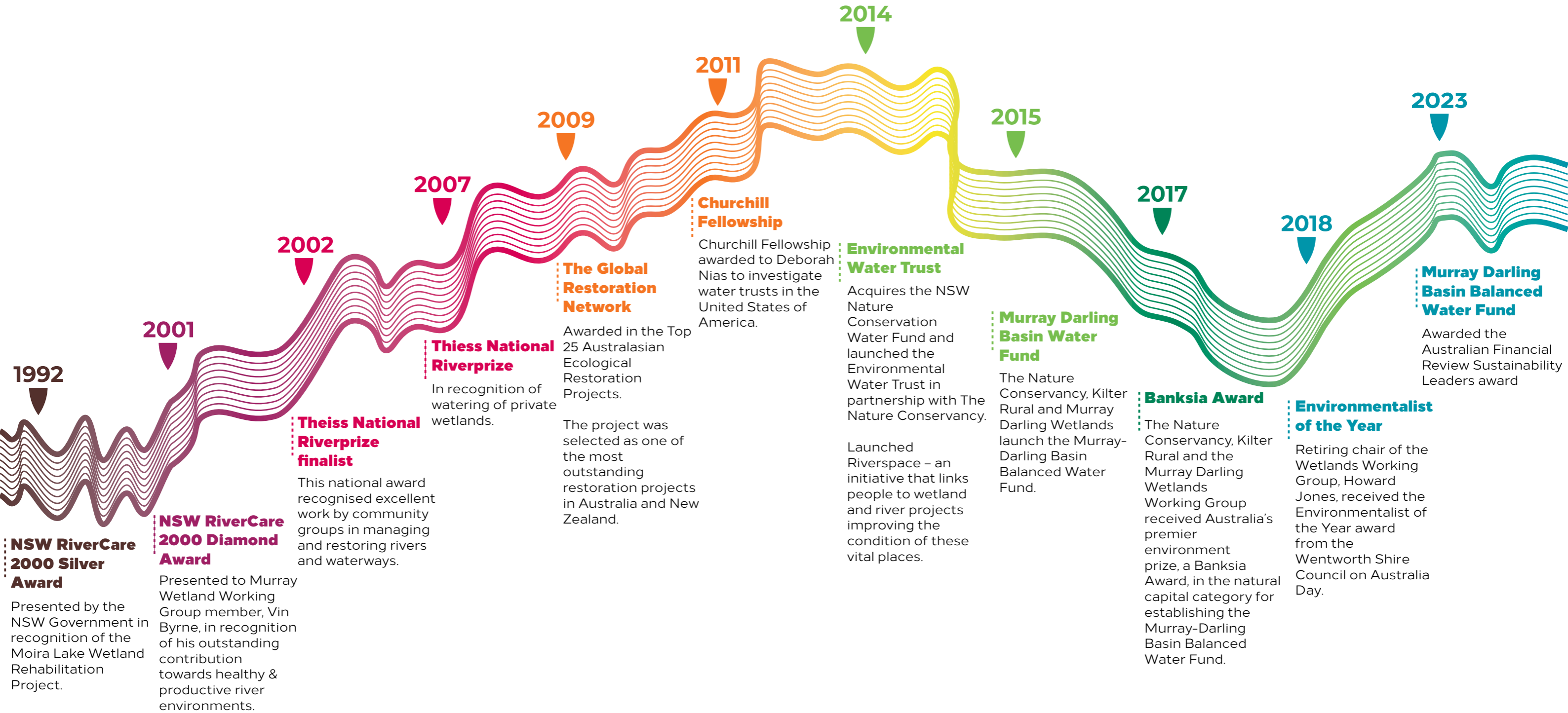
Ji is a proud Bangerang/Wiradjuri woman and an emerging leader of the Bangerang Nation. Ji is passionate about caring for country and providing opportunities for her own mob to care and speak for country.

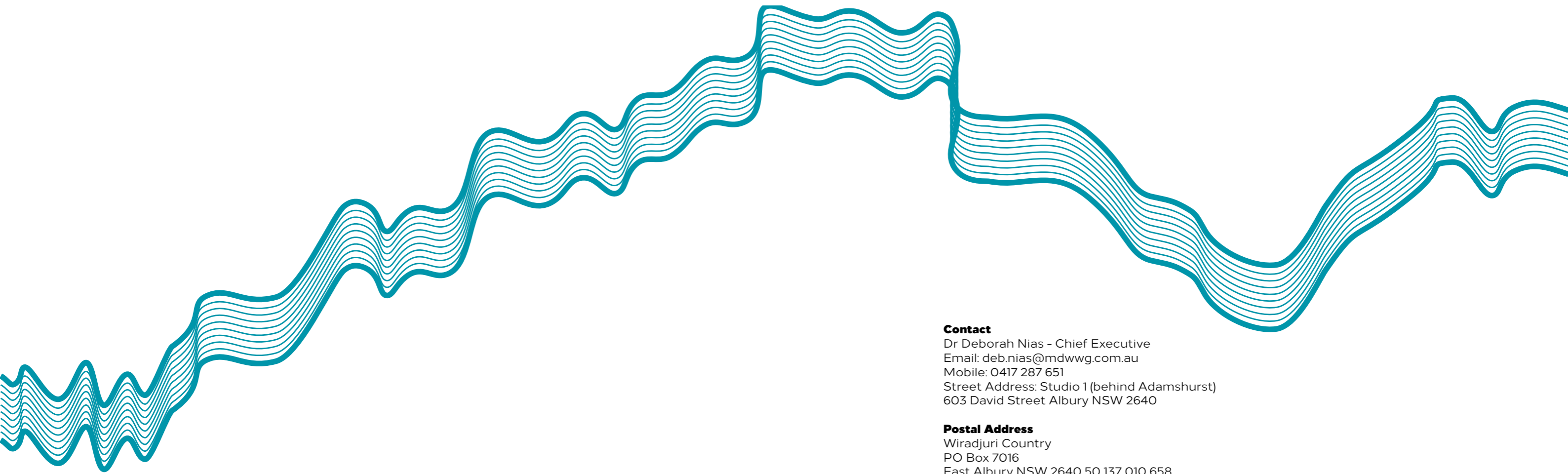
Ji is a Cultural Liaison officer for Trust for Nature Victoria and director of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Education (ACHE) which operates across her traditional home lands and country.

DIRECTOR	ATTENDED	HELD
Mr Ian Davidson	4	4
Ms Judith Frankenberg	4	4
Ms Kathryn Ridge	3	4
Mr Jamie Woods	3	4
Mr Adrian Wells	3	4
Mr John Pettigrew	3	4
Mr Nick Lilley	4	4
Mr David Harriss	2	4
Mr James Forbes	2	4
Ms Jiara Atkinson	1	1

DIRECTOR	ATTENDED	HELD
Ms Judith Frankenberg	4	4
Ms Kathryn Ridge	3	4
Mr Nick Lilley	4	4





**Contact**

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Findex Albury, NSW
Insurance Policies
Association Liability Insurance, Voluntary Workers Insurance and Public
Liability Insurance.

Charitable status

The Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Ltd. is considered a not-for-profit organisation by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). The Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Ltd. is also registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) as a Charity. It has Deductible Gift Recipient Status (DGR) and is registered on the Australian Commonwealth Government Register of Environmental Organisations. It has a Board of Directors and Members from the wider community, including scientists, landholders and conservationists.

www.mdwwg.com.au



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and activities over the prior fiscal year.

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