



Murray Darling
WETLANDS
WORKING GROUP LTD.

Annual Report 2019-2020

Including reports on:

- Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Public Fund
- The Environmental Water Trust

Rehabilitated wetlands: A lasting legacy for local communities
to build on and enjoy the benefits that wetlands have to offer

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.

Our organisation

The Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group was founded in 1992 as a community-government partnership to restore and conserve wetlands along the Murray and Lower Darling rivers. Since then, the Working Group has pioneered the restoration of wetlands by combining community knowledge, science, old-fashioned common sense and partnerships.

Over the years, the Working Group has become a model of best practice in managing wetlands in the Murray-Darling Basin.

Much of the work was achieved during a significant drought and rapid water reform. In doing so, the Working Group demonstrated that water management and change need not be tarnished by conflict and argument. In recent years, much of the group's experiences and knowledge have been integrated into the way that state and commonwealth agencies manage their environmental water.

For the first 17 years of its life, the organisation was run by a committee but changed its operations to a company with a board in 2009. Since then it has established a water trust and a balanced fund while also entering the water market. However, community understanding and rehabilitation of wetlands is still its core vision.



PHOTO: © CHRIS TZAROS,
BIRDS, BUSH AND BEYOND

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Highlights of 2019-20

2019 - 2020: The group's wetland watering program continues to deliver successful ecological outcomes across the riverine regions of NSW and Victoria in partnership with governments, landholders and Traditional Owners.

November 2019: Annual General Meeting and tour of Gayini (Nimmie-Caira).

November 2019: For the first time, water is delivered to wetlands within Gayini.

February 2020: Dr Mike Maher retires from the board.

February 2020: Monitoring of waterbirds commences as part of the Save our Species project in Gayini (Nimmie-Caira).

March 2020: An application for a 10-year project in southern NSW to improve the connections between wetlands and rivers within the Murray-Baaka-Murrumbidgee Region is forwarded to the NSW Environmental Trust.

March 2020: Staff implement safe COVID-19 operating procedures.

June 2020: Appointed to the Environmental Water Delivery Panel for the provision of Commonwealth environmental water services.

Our vision, mission and goals

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 values

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.

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).

We shall achieve these goals by:

- 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.



Report from our Chair

Dear members,

I am delighted to present the annual report of the Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Ltd for the year 2019-2020. And what a year it has been!

It started with the impacts of an on-going drought across south-eastern Australia, followed by catastrophic fires and the cessation of flows in many inland waterways, including the Darling River. This was followed by the COVID-19 global pandemic which not only altered the way we all live and led to significant changes in how the Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group operates.

The result was the board having to meet on-line but unable to meet for the significant hand-over of Gayini (Nimmie-Caira) to the Nari Nari Tribal Council. In early-2020, we farewelled Mike Maher from the board. The board is grateful for the valuable contribution that Mike made over three years. The board was impressed with the rapid staff implementation of safe COVID-19 operating procedures. And despite restrictions on their movements and face-to-face engagement, they were able to continue much of their essential monitoring work as well as secure new projects.

The seasonal rainfall conditions have improved greatly in the past 12 months, leading to the Lower Darling River reconnecting with the Murray River and a reasonable amount of water entering Menindee Lakes. Further, Gayini is currently having good volumes of water flowing through the extensive infrastructure which appears to be operating as hoped and triggering excellent wetland responses.

Meanwhile, the Working Group's staff and directors continue to look to grow our group so that we can continue contributing to the many opportunities available to work with willing land and water managers on wetland enhancement and restoration, including with key traditional owners.

We are eagerly awaiting a decision on our major River Connections grant application which we hope will unlock many of these opportunities. We thank the many landholders, organisations, councils and Aboriginal groups who supported our visionary application.

I am optimistic about 2021 and the potential for the Working Group to grow and harness the profound community interest in wetland health and management in partnership with governments and other not-for-profit partners.

Ian Davidson
CHAIR



Report from our Chief Executive Officer

Dear members,

Despite the rather turbulent year, our wetland watering program continues to deliver successful ecological outcomes across the riverine regions of NSW and Victoria in partnership with governments, landholders and Traditional Owners.

We delivered water on behalf of the Environmental Water Trust and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH) into wetlands in Victoria and NSW. This water provided a variety of ecological outcomes in wetlands, including providing suitable habitat across all sites for waterbirds with a diversity of feeding and foraging behaviours. This included fish-eaters, deep water foragers, dabbling ducks, shoreline foragers and large waders. Wingillie Station in far south western NSW continues to support habitat for nearly a thousand waterbirds. Following the successful release of Murray Hardyhead at Wingillie Station in 2018, monitoring carried out by NSW Fisheries has indicated that their breeding success continued during the 2019-20 watering year.

Watering of Fletchers Creek has continued this year under the leadership of our Patron, Howard Jones. This on-going rehabilitation project is starting to see real results in improvement of vegetation and water quality.

The Save our Species project funded by the NSW Environmental Trust continues in Gayini (Nimmie-Caira). This year was the first that monitoring was conducted. It was also the first year that we worked closely with our project partners to deliver water to wetlands within Gayini. Australasian Bitterns, Freckled Duck and Blue-billed Duck were all identified across the monitoring period.

During the year, we completed a large grant application to the NSW Environmental Trust for a 10-year project in southern NSW, focussing on improving the connections between wetlands and rivers within the Murray-Baaka-Murrumbidgee Region. Our application was one of only three that were considered in the

final round of the River Connections Program, and we eagerly await the final decision.

Our on-going relationship with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder was strengthened during the year through our successful appointment to the Environmental Water Delivery Panel for the provision of Commonwealth environmental water services. This panel supports the functions of the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office. We look forward to working with the Commonwealth in expanding the wetland area where we can deliver environmental water.

The first half of 2020 has seen many challenges for the wetlands and rivers we love. Drought, bushfire and the ever-increasing pressure from climate-change, coupled with the human challenge of the world-wide COVID-19 pandemic, has meant we have all had to dig that little deeper into our reserves of resilience whilst maintaining our optimism and hope. To be surrounded by people who continue to share the vision of a better world and maintain the perseverance and passion to make that happen, continues to inspire and motivate me.

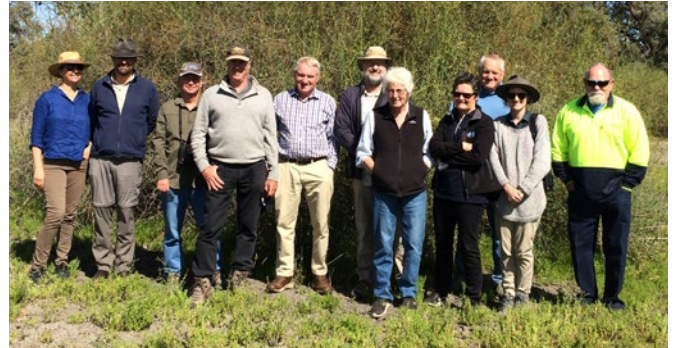
My sincere thanks, as always, to the group's directors, advisors, staff and our families for their continued support and leadership.

Deborah Nias
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Our governance

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. As at 30 June 2019, the group's board comprised the following directors:



The MDWWG board and staff visited Avalon Swamp with Nari Nari Tribal Council member Ian Woods as part of a tour during November 2019.

NAME	POSITION	BACKGROUND	DATES OF SERVICE
Mr Ian Davidson Wangaratta, VIC	Chair	Natural resource management	2017 – current
Ms Kathryn Ridge Sydney, NSW	Deputy Chair	Lawyer	2012 – current
Ms Judith Frankenberg Howlong, NSW	Board member	Beef farmer, ecologist (retired)	2012 – current
Dr Michael Maher Canberra, ACT	Board member	Natural resource manager specialist	2016 – 2020
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	Financial specialist	2016 – current
Mr Adrian Wells Leneva, VIC	Board member	Education, community engagement, communication	2016 – current
Mr James Forbes Sydney, NSW	Board member	Philanthropy, fund-raising	2019 – current

Board meetings

Four ordinary board meetings were held during 2019-20. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, two meetings in 2020 were held on-line.

The number of meetings and attendance by each of the company's directors are set out in Appendix 1.

Annual General Meeting

The company's annual general meeting was held in Balranald, NSW on 13 November 2019.

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.

Appointments and retirements

In early-2020, Dr Mike Maher retired from the board after three years' service.

Work, health and safety

The company's Work, Health and Safety Committee reported no work, health or safety incidents during the year. However, in March 2020, the board implemented a safety and working-from-home policy to ensure the safety and well-being of staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Managing our finances

The Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group is a company limited by guarantee and must 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 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 Wetlands Working Group's principal purpose.

During 2019-20, members of the Finance Audit Risk and Governance Committee were Mrs Judith Frankenberg, Ms Kathryn Ridge and Mr Nick Lilley. Their attendance at meetings is set out in Appendix 1.

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



Our major achievements
during the year

PHOTO: © CHRIS TZAROS, BIRDS, BUSH AND BEYOND

Our environmental water trust

First in Australia dedicated to improving social, ecological and cultural outcomes for wetlands

During the year, the Environmental Water Trust made available 1,400 megalitres of environmental water for four wetland sites in Victoria and New South Wales.

Watering wetlands

The Annual Watering Plain for 2019-20 was accepted by the Environmental Water Trust in October 2019. The trust received 1,400 megalitres of environmental water in 2019-20. Activities during the year included the delivery of 530 megalitres to four wetland sites in northern Victoria and south west New South Wales. A further 61.4 megalitres from the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder was delivered to the south west New South Wales site (Wingillie Station). A total of 790 megalitres was traded in the open market, and the resulting funds were used to establish an infrastructure fund. The fund will be used to finance infrastructure or other activities to improve or enable delivery or improve the management response of environmental water to approved EWT wetland sites. The trade volume was made available as a result of additional water being available in the latter part of the water year. The remaining volume was carried over into the 2020-21 water year.

VICTORIAN WETLANDS

The aim of the watering events in Victoria were:

- Maintain the health of Rushy Riverine Swamp and Riverine Swamp Forest vegetation communities.
- Maintain the health and extent of the Plains Grassy Wetland vegetation community.
- Provide areas of aquatic habitat for animals, including birds and frogs.
- Maintain the health of culturally significant trees.

Yambuna Lagoon

- Received 40 megalitres
- Forty plant species were identified, including the threatened River Swamp Wallaby-grass.
- Waterbird habitat suitable for seventeen species including those that are fish-eaters, deep water foragers, dabbling ducks, shoreline foragers and large waders.

O'Kane's Swamp

- Received 140 megalitres
- Twenty waterbird species were recorded including the Vulnerable listed species Hardhead *Aythya australis*, and the Near Threatened Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax varius*.

The Plain Paddock

- Received 75 megalitres.
- The first watering event for this site provided a good response for waterbirds including: Australian White Ibis, Black-fronted Dotterel, Black-winged Stilt, Glossy Ibis (listed as Vulnerable in Victoria), Grey Teal, Masked Lapwing, Red-kneed Dotterel, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (EPBC listed), Straw-necked Ibis, White-faced Heron and Whiskered Terns.

ENVIRONMENTAL Water Trust





Yambuna Lagoon, October 2019, following 30 weeks post watering.



Above: The Plain Paddock October 2019 following four days post watering (the first environmental water delivery to this site).

Below (L-R): Lake Henry, November 2019 – environmental water delivered during spring promoted the health of Lignum; Henry Creek, December 2019.



NSW WETLANDS

The aim of the watering events in NSW were to:

- Maintain health of River Red Gum-Warrego Grass-couch grass Riparian Tall Woodland.
- Provide habitat for waterbirds.
- Provide habitat for Southern Bell Frog (Endangered in NSW).
- Maintain the health of culturally significant trees.

Wingillie Station

- Received 336.4 megalitres (comprising 275 from EWT and 61.4 from CEWH).
- Three wetlands at Wingillie Station were watered:
 - Lake Henry
 - Henry Creek
 - Little Frenchman's Creek
- Thirty-one waterbird species were recorded including Blue-billed Duck, the Vulnerable listed Freckled Duck and Royal Spoonbill.
- Six species of frog were recorded including the Southern Bell Frog.
- Seven native species of fish were recorded including Murray Hardyhead (listed as Endangered in NSW), Un-specked Hardyhead and Flat-headed Gudgeon.



Gayini (Nimmie-Caira)

Environmental water delivery at Gayini

During November to December 2019, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder released 30,000 ML of environmental water for delivery across Gayini and into the neighbouring Yanga National Park and Talpie Creek. The delivery resulted in the maintenance of habitat in key conservation areas such as Eulimbah, Telephone Bank and Avalon Swamp. An additional 3,000 ML was delivered during February to support Royal Spoonbill and Australian White Ibis breeding events.

Waterbird monitoring surveys were carried out by the Working Group as part of the Saving Our Species project recorded large numbers of waterbirds, with evidence of waterbirds including Black Swan, Black-tailed Native Hen, Red-kneed Dotterel and White-faced Heron breeding in response to environmental water delivery.

The Southern Bell Frog was one the many other species that benefitted from the delivery of environmental water. The Southern Bell Frog is listed as endangered and is an important part of the wetland food web, providing an important food source, alongside other frogs, fish and insects, of Australasian Bitterns and other waterbirds. The aquatic vegetation response was also significant, with large areas of culturally significant plants present in the wetlands.

Environmental water delivery at Gayini resulted in a significant aquatic vegetation response.



Gayini back under Nari Nari ownership

On 20 March 2020 after many years of lobbying, the members of Nari Nari Tribal Council celebrated the return of almost 88,000 hectares of internationally significant Murrumbidgee floodplain to their ownership. Gayini is now legally back in the hands of the Traditional Custodians after more than 150 years of dispossession.

The Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group welcomed the good news. The Working Group are part of a consortium lead by The Nature Conservancy and also includes the Nari Nari Tribal Council and University of NSW's Centre for Ecosystem Science, and have been involved in co-managing the site with Nari Nari Tribal Council since May 2018. With the ownership now officially handed back, the Nari Nari people will be able to reconnect with their country while they continue to protect the environment, preserve the Aboriginal heritage and support the intergenerational transfer of knowledge of caring for country, while also providing sustainable sources of income such as carbon farming, grazing in non-sensitive areas and cultural eco-tourism.



Saving Our Species at Gayini – protecting the Australian Painted Snipe

Following funding being secured from the Saving Our Species program of the NSW Environmental Trust in 2018-19, this year was the first year that monitoring was conducted, and also the first year working closely with our project partners (Nari Nari Tribal Council, NSW Environmental Trust, University NSW) to deliver water to wetlands within Gayini. Environmental water was delivered to three targeted wetland sites from August to February covering over 5,700 hectares and creating habitat for Australasian Bittern and the other three species who are set to benefit from this program; Blue-billed Duck, Freckled Duck and the Australian Painted Snipe.

On-ground waterbird surveys recorded more than 9,900 wetland birds, across 54 species. Australasian Bitterns were recorded calling in wetland sites during December to February indicating that breeding took place, alongside the Australian White Ibis and Royal Spoonbill. The project is providing a diverse range of wetland types including for the Southern Bell Frog (listed as endangered) which has been recorded across all three wetlands, and researchers have recorded successful breeding and recruitment.

It was a successful initial year of water delivery at the site, with recent upgrades in infrastructure changing the way water moved throughout the wetlands. It provided a good opportunity to share results with partners, and for multiple organisations to work together to reinstate seasonal wetting and drying of wetlands at Gayini.



Board Meeting and Tour

On November 13 the MDWWG board held their meeting and AGM at Balranald, this was followed by a tour to Yanga National Park and Gayini on November 14. Joined by members of the Nari Nari Tribal Council, the board and staff visited key sites at Gayini such as Avalon Swamp, Loorica Lake and the regulator at Suicide Swamp - showcasing the benefits of recent water delivery to sites at Gayini, the potential for additional environmental watering and the importance of new infrastructure for ensuring successful environmental water delivery to provide key habitat for waterbirds such as the Australasian Bittern, Australian Painted Snipe and the endangered frog species Southern Bell Frog.



Above: The MDWWG Board and staff, along with Nari Nari Tribal Council members Ian and Jamie Woods, visited the Suicide Bank regulator, November 2019.

Below: Little Frenchman's Creek, following environmental water delivery to support Murray Hardyhead, November 2019.



Breeding Success of Murray Hardyhead at Wingillie Station

Murray Hardyhead, a small fish (up to 9 cm long), currently listed as endangered and previously considered as being extinct in NSW, have been reintroduced at Wingillie Station and are continuing to breed. To protect the Murray Hardyhead, a small population were translocated into a purpose-built holding pond on Wingillie Station in 2018. Following the release of the fish into a small wetland (Little Frenchman's Creek) on Wingillie Station, ongoing water delivery and monitoring have been implemented to ensure that they are able to thrive and survive.

Water levels remained relatively low throughout the 2019-20 watering period, with two small environmental watering events delivered to support Murray Hardyhead. During November 34.4 ML was delivered to support their increasing population and following hot conditions a total of 27 ML was delivered during March to decrease the salinity levels within Little Frenchmans Creek. The small November delivery ensured water levels remained throughout summer, however, the hot conditions caused extremely low water levels, and high salinity became apparent in January. With a multi-organisational approach, an emergency pumping during March was able to ensure that the Murray Hardyhead fish were able to persist. The total volume delivered (61.4 ML) was provided by key partner the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder.

The Murray Hardyhead have been sampled numerous times between 2018 and 2020 by Fisheries, with their monitoring indicating that they are successfully breeding and recruiting, providing a promising start to the future of the small-bodied fish on Wingillie Station and an increase to their current limited extent across the Murray-Darling Basin.



Australian Government
Commonwealth Environmental Water Office

Fletcher's Creek

Protecting environmental and cultural assets

Fletcher's Creek is an ephemeral creek system that connects to Tucker's Creek from the Murray River (within the Lock 10 weir pool) during very high flows. It is located 6.5 km north east from Wentworth. The creek has remained disconnected from the high flows of the Murray River for over two decades due to in-stream infrastructure and lack of suitable high flows in the system. This disconnection resulted in both vegetation and biodiversity decline. For the local Aboriginal people, the lack of water in the creek and lake has resulted in a disconnection with their culture and obligations to care for Country. This project seeks to reconnect the creek for multiple social, cultural and ecological outcomes.

The project, which started in September 2017, continued during the year to improve the vegetation along the creek and to encourage waterbirds and frogs to visit and breed, as well as giving the Barkindji Maraura Elders Environment Team greater connection to Country. Our Patron, Howard Jones, has led the project for the Working Group and the Department of Planning Industry and Environment delivered 80 ML of environmental water during October 2019. Monitoring of the watering event was undertaken by Barkindji Maraura Elders Environment Team along with DPIE staff and Mildura Birdlife. Monitoring included photo points, vegetation response surveys, opportunistic frog surveys and bird surveys



Fletchers Creek, following water delivery in October 2019.



PHOTO: HOWARD JONES

Our public fund

The Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Ltd established the Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Public Fund in May 2014. The fund and is registered with the Register of Environmental Organisations (administered by the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy). The Register of Environmental Organisations is a Commonwealth tax deductibility scheme for environmental organisations enabled under the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997*. It allows eligible organisations to be endorsed as Deductible Gift Recipients by the Australian Taxation Office. As such, donations to the Fund are tax deductible for the donor. To be eligible for entry to the Register of Environmental Organisations, organisations must have a principal purpose of either:

- the protection and enhancement of the natural environment or of a significant aspect of the natural environment; or
- the provision of information or education, or the carrying on of research, about the natural environment or a significant aspect of the natural environment.

The Public Fund assets are used solely to support the Working Group's environmental purposes. The Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Ltd reports annually to the Department of the Environment and Energy, detailing how money (and/or property) donated to the Public Fund has been used, and how this contributes to the Working Group's principal purpose.

How to contribute to the fund

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





Staff and stakeholders

Our engagement with key stakeholders

During the year, the company's directors and chief executive officer engaged regularly with the following organisations:

- Aquasave – Nature Glenelg Trust
- Barkandji Native Title Group Aboriginal Corporation
- Bottle Bend Trust
- Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder – Canberra
- Gayini Nimmie-Caira Consortium
- Kilter Rural
- Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations
- Nari-Nari Tribal Council
- 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

Our valued supporters

During the year, the company was supported in its work by the following. We thank them for their valued advice, help and encouragement during 2019-20:

- Australian River Restoration Centre – Canberra, ACT
- Caldow family – Nathalia, VIC
- 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 Darling Basin Authority – Canberra, ACT
- 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
- Parks Victoria
- Petaurus Education Group Inc – Albury, NSW
- SA Water – Adelaide, SA
- Trentham Estate Winery – Trentham Cliffs, NSW
- Trust for Nature Victoria – Melbourne, VIC
- Victorian Environmental Water Holder – Melbourne, VIC
- Victorian Fisheries Authority – Melbourne, VIC
- Western Local Land Services – Gol Gol, NSW
- Wetlands Alliance

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

Thank you Trentham Estate for your continued support of our work.

T
TRENTHAM
ESTATE

Our employees

NAME	POSITION	DATE APPOINTED
Dr Deborah Nias	Chief Executive Officer	2012
Sarah Ning	Project Officer – Albury	2012
Ali Borrell	Project Officer – Albury	2018

Our publications

Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Ltd (2019) **2018-2019 Annual Report of the Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Ltd**, November 2019

Sue Jackson & Deb Nias (2019) **Watering country: Aboriginal partnerships with environmental water managers of the Murray-Darling Basin, Australia**, Australasian Journal of Environmental Management, 26:3, 287-303, DOI: 10.1080/14486563.2019.1644544

Ellis, I. Whiterod, N. and Nias, D. (June 2020). **Short-term intervention monitoring associated with the translocation of Murray Hardyhead into Little Frenchmans Creek, Wingillie Station NSW**. Technical report to The Commonwealth Environmental Water Office.



Appendix 1

Our board members

The directors of Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Ltd. are experienced and dedicated members of the community. They include scientists, landholders, lawyers and conservationists. Their depth of experience, technical skills and networks is used to guide and manage the Working Group's strategic activities.

IAN DAVIDSON'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 is a corporate finance professional with over a decade of experience in raising capital 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 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 actually do something, not just talk or write about things. Until early-2018, Judy served as deputy chair of the company.

DR MIKE MAHER retired from the NSW Government following a 40-year career spanning research, policy and management of inland wetlands. This career provided opportunities to witness wetlands and their inhabitants across a diverse range of climatic conditions. Mike was instrumental in establishing many wetland reserves in western NSW by combining an understanding of the ecological values of each reserve and developing a trusting relationship with the relevant landholders. He retired from the board in early-2020 after three years as a director.

KATHY RIDGE 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 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, Adrian served on various local, state and commonwealth natural resource management committees and working parties. He has an interest in communication, community engagement and history. Adrian currently chairs the Petaurus Education Group and is a member of the Landcare NSW State Council.

JOHN PETTIGREW 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 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 was appointed to the board in early 2019. He is currently CEO at the Jane Goodall Institute Australia. James has held senior marketing and fundraising roles with the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation, Nature Conservation Trust of NSW and WWF-Australia. Along with operating his own consulting business, he is a senior associate with Global Philanthropic, a leader in philanthropic fundraising with offices in Europe, Asia, Oceania and North America. James' connection to the Murray-Darling River goes back to the 19th century when his great-great grandfather owned Ned's Corner Station. In the 20th century, his family owned Lake Victoria Station.

Board member attendance

The number of board meetings and attendance by each of the company's directors are set out below:

DIRECTOR	ATTENDED	HELD
Ms Judith Frankenberg	4	4
Ms Kathryn Ridge	3	4
Mr Ian Davidson	4	4
Dr Michael Maher	2	2
Mr Adrian Wells	4	4
Mr John Pettigrew	4	4
Mr Nick Lilley	3	4
Mr David Harriss	4	4
Mr James Forbes	4	4

The number of Finance, Audit, Risk and Governance Committee meetings and attendance by each of the company's directors are set out below:

DIRECTOR	ATTENDED	HELD
Ms Judith Frankenberg	3	4
Ms Kathryn Ridge	3	4
Mr Nick Lilley	2	4

Appendix 2

Our awards

Since 1992, the Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group has received numerous awards. Below are some of the more significant awards made to the group and its individuals.

1995: **NSW RiverCare 2000 Silver Award**
– presented by the NSW Government in recognition of the Working Group's Moira Lake wetland rehabilitation project.

2001: **NSW RiverCare 2000 Diamond Award**
– presented to Working Group member, Vin Byrne, in recognition of his contribution to healthy river environments.

2002: The Working Group was a finalist in the **Theiss Services National Riverprize**. This national award recognised excellent work by community groups in managing and restoring rivers and waterways.

2007: Awarded in recognition of its achievements, particularly the project to water wetlands on private property, the Working Group won the prestigious **National Riverprize**.

2009: The Global Restoration Network awarded the Working Group a place in the Top 25 **Australasian Ecological Restoration Projects** for its project of watering wetlands on private property.

2011: Chief Executive Officer of the Working Group, Deb Nias, was awarded a **Churchill Fellowship** to investigate water trusts in the United States of America.

2015: The Working Group agreed to purchase one of seven Australasian Bittern naming rights to support tracking the birds in memory of Working Group member, Vin Byrnes. Tracking the bird will hopefully determine where it lives in the non-breeding season.

2017: In November 2017, the Working Group received Australia's **Banksia Award** in recognition of leadership in valuing, measuring, managing and investing in Australia's natural capital. The award was shared between the Working Group, The Nature Conservancy Australia and Kilter Rural.

2018: Retiring chair of the Working Group, Howard Jones, was awarded **Environmentalist of the Year Award** by the Wentworth Shire Council on Australia Day.

How to contact us

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ABN

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Auditor

Crowe 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.

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