

ANNUAL REPORT

Murraylands & Riverland Local Government Association
2024 / 25



Murraylands and Riverland Local Government Association



Constituent Councils



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MRLGA OVERVIEW

Mission

Being a unified local government sector working in the best interest of the region and our communities.

Our Charter

- Speaking with one voice
- Building partnerships
- Working with the LGA
- Planning for and with the region
- Coordinating resources and representation
- Enhancing efficiencies

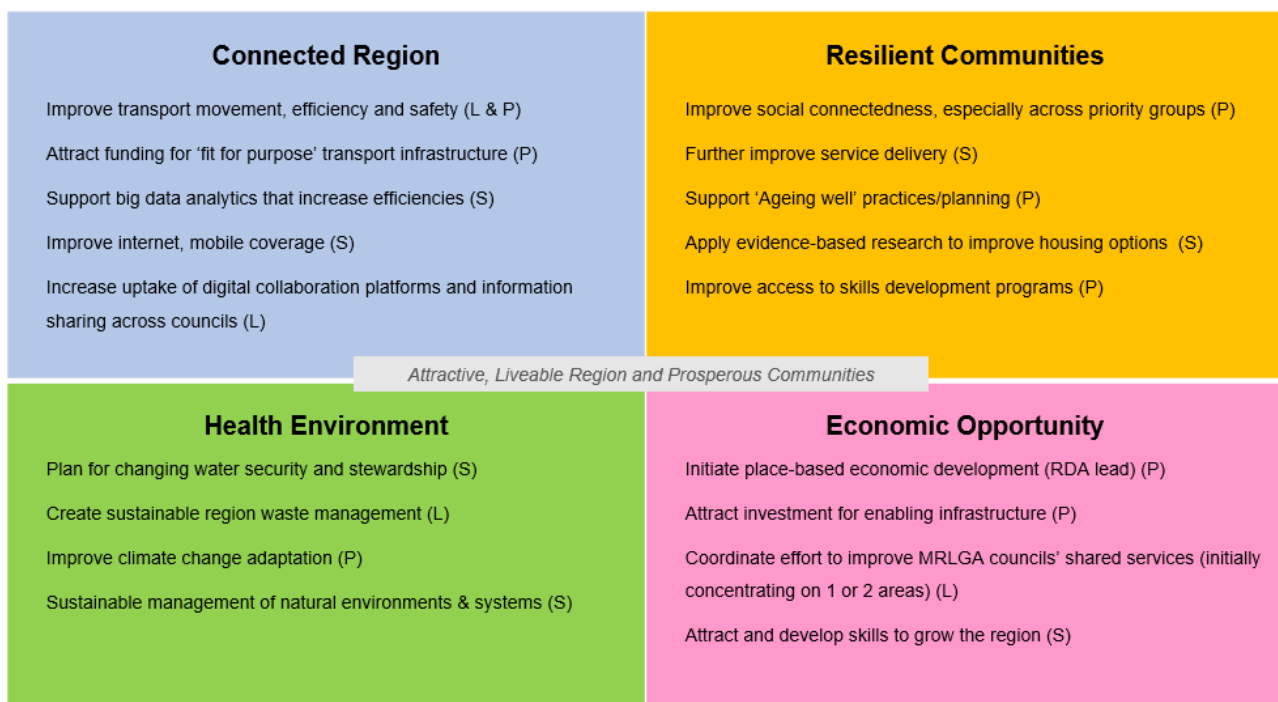
Values and Behaviours

Integrity, Leadership, Collaboration, Credibility, Unity

Role

Working to the MRLGA Charter, the Association motivates, advocates and represents its eight constituent Councils to advance cooperation, strategic partnerships and governance arrangements that oversee programs and projects in the region. Through its coordination of effort, the Association leads and assists its councils with evidence-based approaches to high level planning, communication and representation. The MRLGA works closely with Local Government Association SA, Commonwealth and State Governments, as well as regional partners including Regional Development Australia Murraylands and Riverland (RDA MR) and Murraylands & Riverland Landscape Board.

Strategic Framework



PRESIDENT'S REPORT



*MRLGA President
Mayor Caroline Phillips*

The Murraylands and Riverland Local Government Association, together with its eight constituent councils, continued in 2024/25 to pursue its goal of fostering a unified local government sector that works collaboratively in the best interests of the region and our communities.

As regional councils across the state deliver outstanding services to their local communities, our role as listeners, leaders, and advocates has been to engage with neighbouring councils on shared regional challenges and opportunities. These conversations have enabled us to exchange ideas, identify solutions, build networks, and strengthen cooperation—ultimately leading to greater efficiencies, mutual support, and collective progress.

On behalf of the Association, I extend my sincere thanks to all Board Members, CEOs, Committee Members, and staff for their continued commitment to collaboration. It is through this spirit of working together that we achieve unity, and in unity, we find our strength.

Reflecting on the achievements of the 2024/25 year, I am proud of the continuing strides the MRLGA has made toward our vision of creating attractive, livable, and prosperous communities. Our efforts remain firmly anchored in our mission to cultivate strong, enduring relationships, unify the local government sector, foster partnerships, and enhance regional efficiencies. With the support of our councils and partners, we have continued to advance strategic initiatives that strengthen regional infrastructure, enhance social resilience, and promote environmental sustainability.

Key achievements and highlights throughout the year have included:

Drought Response and Preparedness

Over the past year, we increased our role in drought advocacy, ensuring local voices were heard at both State and Federal levels from within the region. We gathered and shared critical intelligence on the impacts of drought to pass to Ministerial offices, advocated for regional round tables to be held more widely following the Limestone Coast session, and highlighted regional needs and financial relief measures at the Agribusiness Forum. Our active contribution to the SA Drought Advisory Working Group fed intelligence into the States working group that influences the recovery support packages. This time was further complimented through in-kind resources from the subsidiary to administer, design and deliver Regional Drought Resilience (RDR) under Future Drought Program. To optimise this funding, we designed and hosted a dedicated stakeholder workshop with over 30 participants collaborating on opportunities to increase drought preparedness for farming communities. We supported the Murraylands Drought Survey with targeted presentations to peak bodies. And facilitated regular online updates with Rural Business Support, ensuring Councils remained informed of case numbers and emerging challenges. A submission was also made to the Federal Productivity Commission on the RDRP. In a regional first, we curated the design and secured state support for a central coordination role at the RDR Consortium, hosted by the Landscape Board. The role will lead region-wide resilience initiatives under the FDF program. Its central positioning will enable it to see all resilience projects across the region (including the Climate Smart Agriculture program and other resilience programs) enabling greater cross-pollination of ideas and a stronger chance of reaching communities with practical outcomes. The pilot of the central role will begin in 25/26.

We acknowledge and thank Mayor Paul Simmons of Coorong District Council for representing local government at the SA Drought Advisory Group since October 2024. The unprecedented conditions of 2024 were the driest rainfall year on record and it placed immense pressure on farming businesses, families, and regional communities. In response, local government has remained a trusted advocate and strong voice, continuing to seek reforms in drought response and working to influence the design of investment initiatives that deliver meaningful support into those most affected.

Public Health and Wellbeing

The year marked good progress in advancing regional public health and wellbeing initiatives. We facilitated and co-ordinated the biannual Section 52 statutory reporting from eight councils to the Chief Public Health Officer on the Regional Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (and Council's 126 initiatives). The process included several engagement opportunities across all eight Councils including online information sessions, capturing regional issues, and advocating to the Mental Health Commissioner's Office. A significant achievement following this was the brokering of a partnership with Preventive Health SA, securing a \$400,000 regional

investment in prevention efforts with only a \$5,000 contribution required from participating councils. The partnership is a giant leap towards greater State to Local joint efforts for healthy communities and alongside the funding component is a substantial non-monetary value through access to data and information, campaigns, specialist advice, intelligence, and strategic planning. This achievement strengthens cross-council collaboration and provides a foundation for greater cross agency initiatives towards public health and reducing siloed work. We also hosted a regional workshop in Mannum for the Regional Public Health & Wellbeing Committee and key staff, strengthening collaboration and knowledge-sharing. In addition, we observed many positive achievements, events and outcomes in year two of the three-year partnership we brokered with Riverland Council and Office of Recreation, Sport and Racing (ORSR), which is successfully increasing community participation across the Riverland. Our efforts to widen the program to neighbouring Councils as well as continue the partnership with State is underway.

We continued to maintain growing relationships with agency's connected to this portfolio including MMRLHN and Country SAPHN, (3) Regional Education Directors, SA Health, Foundations SA, WoTL and SA Drought Hub. And attended the State Strategic Direction workshop for the State Public Health Plan (2030). We were part of a targeted group of invited stakeholders to inform future opportunities. And attended the Foundations SA opening and have since promoted their programs to Councils as an alternative avenue for community to empower action.

Waste Management & Resource Recovery

Waste management remains a critical focus for many councils, given its status as one of the largest and most enduring service contracts delivered. In 2024/25, significant efforts were made to align our strategic vision with our capacity for implementation. Working closely with our constituent councils, the MRLGA structured two new positions within the waste management portfolio: Circular Economy and Waste Lead, and Waste Educational Program Lead. These appointments have been pivotal in advancing our regional waste management initiatives.

Guided by our Regional Strategy, we have advanced a range of initiatives designed to strengthen waste management, sustainability, and community awareness. Key projects underway include:

- Kerbside Waste Service Review,
- Cross-council contract management for waste services,
- Procured and project managed a joint waste bin audit across five participating councils (that resulted in an overall savings of \$70k from undertaking joint procurement).
- A Waste Education Program was developed across five participating councils and includes targeted themes and events, some include community information sessions, facility tours, a new Sustainability Calendar and enhanced 'which bin' material to amplify the campaign, all to build awareness and encourage community participation.
- We are also exploring future opportunities for Riverland Composting, comparing case studies like the Mildura regional composting model, and
- We have developed a logistics map to identify the regions waste assets and future freight efficiencies.

In addition to these initiatives, we actively represented the region in advocacy efforts, including a submission to the EPA on future reform and GISA's Draft State Waste Strategy. We continue to strengthen partnerships across the sector, maintaining strong connections with the LGA, GISA, AHRWMA, Greenhill Energy, WMRR, End Food Waste Australia (The Great Unwaste), KESAB, PIRSA Fruit Fly team and other key stakeholders.

Transport and Infrastructure

Our Regional Transport and Assets Committee made strong progress in strategic infrastructure planning. 2024/25 delivered continued collaboration and coordination across Council infrastructure teams to oversee the Regional Transport Plan and associated database of roads. The coordinated efforts resulted in a remarkable \$4.3 million funding package through the Special Local Roads Program (SLRP) for priority road upgrades across councils. These projects are essential for maintaining and enhancing road infrastructure that supports economic growth, tourism routes and community transport. This is a significant regional roads package obtained through the program and we give credit to all Council Director's and their infrastructure teams for their forward integrated planning and shovel ready agility. Councils were supported through complex claim processes, and a priority list for 2025/26 SLRP applications was successfully coordinated.

We have also initiated liaison with Federal Government on Roads to Recovery and SA Grants commission on opportunities for efficiency and consolidation of asset databases to inform forward work plans. We represented the region at the 2024 LGA Roads and Works Conference, and have provided feedback and advice to the State Government for regional needs as it relates to the State Public Transport Strategy under review for (2030).

Murray Darling Basin Plan / Water Recovery

MRLGA has remained a support line to the Councils while they took the lead and attended meetings with PIRSA to influence and contribute to the development of business case plans for the Resilient Rivers Infrastructure Program and Sustainable Communities Program.

We provided representation at the Murray Darling Basin Authority Conference, held in Murray Bridge that included presentations from a range of experts. One of the emerging forecasts is 73 Councils in the Murray Darling Basin will grow over the next 10 years while 42 Councils will either remain unchanged or contract. Murray Bridge has been identified as a 'Rocket Town' listed as one of the top ten highest growth areas and these nuanced forecasts reaffirm the need for Councils to invest in region wide relationships to continue to be in a strong position for partnerships, sharing, coordination and regional development.

(Zone) Emergency Management

We continued to play a role in strengthening regional resilience and emergency management. Our participation included attendance at the Zone Meetings, SES Annual Symposium, the Bureau's Seasonal Outlook webinar, and Disaster Relief's Big Map session in Mannum, ensuring regional perspectives were represented in statewide conversations. We advocated strongly to SAFECOM and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) on the need for improve *betterment funding* following very limited funding post floods. And, together with the ZEMC Chair, engaged with DPC on alternative proposals to an emerging notion to shift regional recovery coordinators from state into zones. And to support continuous improvement, we submitted a lessons learned observations report to SES as part of the State review process.

We continue to strengthen partnerships under this portfolio maintaining strong connections with the LGA Functional Support Group, SafeCom, DPC Recovery, MFS, SES and SaPOL.

Financial Sustainability

We provided a comprehensive 14-page submission to the Federal Inquiry into Local Government Sustainability, presenting 18 key opportunities to reduce financial sustainability hazards. These spanned critical issues such as Financial Assistance Grants, the design of grant programs for regional and rural communities, the Local Government Advice Scheme, infrastructure and asset needs, gaps in aged care and early learning facilities, and workforce challenges and enablers. We also commend Mayor Bailey and Ceo Ben Scales (Mid Murray Council) and Mayor Ron Valentine and Ceo Lachlan Miller (Southern Mallee District Council) for their powerful presentations to the Committee during its visit to South Australia. Throughout the year, we maintained active dialogue with the LGA to ensure our constituent Councils' priorities were aligned with the sector's collective efforts to address financial sustainability risks and secure stronger outcomes for local government.

Climate Ready Regions

We have been a supportive stakeholder in the Climate Ready Regions Steering Committee, contributing to the development of a strong business case for Federal and State funding. Our involvement has included participating in engagement events, helping to facilitate a regional workshop, and acting as a connector between the metropolitan coordination project team and a wide range of stakeholders across the region. We also provided executive advice on future governance models and collaboration opportunities, particularly with the SA Drought Hub and other Federal programs for climate adaptation and resilience, ensuring the business case is positioned with the greatest chance of success.

SAROC Representatives

Mayor Caroline Phillips, Mayor Paul Simmons (July-Nov) and Mayor Simone Bailey (Dec-June) continued to serve as the region's nominated representatives on LGA's SAROC Committee, ensuring our regional voice was heard on sector-wide priorities. On behalf of the constituent Council's, I extend our thanks to Mayor Simone Bailey and Mayor Paul Simmons for generously dedicating their time to travel, attendance, and represent the region at these important forums, demonstrating our collective commitment to collaborating as a sector through to the peak body: LGA.

Looking Ahead

As we enter the 2025/26 period, we remain committed to addressing the evolving needs of our communities. The subsidiary will continue a triple approach to cross council collaboration including a) operational efficiencies and supporting sharing, collaboration and service efficiencies b) region wide strategic projects and c) region wide advocacy, particularly as the State election nears.

On behalf of the Board, I wish to express our appreciation for CEO Carron McLeod for her dedication and leadership throughout the year. Together, we will continue to work towards a vibrant and resilient region.

In Closing

I wish to thank all constituent councils and MRLGA Board Members for the opportunity to be the MRLGA President. The work and service undertaken by our CEO for the Association is valued and I can see our cumulative teamwork, cooperation and collaboration building with each year passing.

I also wish to thank Deputy President, Mayor Ella Winnall for joining me in leading the Association. Mayor Winnall excels in her leadership and responsibilities with her Council and community, as well as a key regional influence for strategic responses and initiatives.

To Mayor Paul Simmons and Mayor Simone Bailey, I congratulate you both as the region's representatives on SAROC. Mayor Simone Bailey has also been a keen attendee at SAROC meetings, forever pursuing advocacy opportunities on behalf on regional and rural communities including the pursuit for financial sustainability of the sector, equity and fairness for regions and healthy communities.

I hand over the Presidency baton to Mayor Winnall, voted in at the MRLGA AGM on 31 July 2025, and also extend my support for Mayor Bailey voted in as Vice President.

I will continue to support platforms like MRLGA for regional, rural and remote Councils. Being the closest level of government to community's, it is important the sector demonstrates to State and Federal Governments that we are a coordinated and cohesive sector as we approach place based strategy's and advocating for communities.

We also acknowledge the Mayors and Councilors who have served a third of a four-year term to its communities. There's a lot of work that goes unseen in the roles, plenty of expectation and a responsibility to carry out our duties in the interest of all, with impartiality. Congratulations on your achievements in the third year, and together we can continue growing the regional community of 74,000 onwards and upwards.

To our most valued Geo's, we congratulate you individually and as a collective. You provide daily leadership to the teams that drive the outcomes and deliver services to community in a respectful, caring and purposeful manner. They are incredibly hard working, wearing multiple hats and showing up to all the conversations at all levels, and we thank you for your devotion to the important leadership roles.

To our Committee Members and supporting key staff we extend our appreciation and thanks to your subject matter expertise that drives our regional strategies, and skills to lead support teams who deliver and coordinate at an operational level. Individually and collectively, your leadership for healthy workplace cultures, innovation and identifying links between strategic objectives and how to deliver them, we thank you for your contributions.

Lastly, as change naturally occurs in the region and we endeavor to keep up with the pressure, expectations and an emerging modern world, it highlights the importance of collaboration and cooperation. We exist beyond our own council boundaries and quite often we can gain more by working together at all levels of Council and all levels of Government. Thank you again for the work you do in all regional and rural communities and the MRLGA looks forward to consolidating on its current work, as together we collaborate, identify and advance the sector where we can for the benefit of the region and our community's.

Mayor Caroline Phillips
MRLGA President (24/25)

MRLGA Board

BOARD	Vice President							
	Berri Barmera Council	Coorong District Council	District Council of Karoonda East Murray	District Council of Loxton Waikerie	Mid Murray Council	Renmark Paringa Council	Rural City of Murray Bridge	Southern Mallee District Council
								
	Mayor Ella Winnall +8 Councillors	Mayor Paul Simmons +7 Councillors	Mayor Caroline Phillips +6 Councillors SAROC Rep	Mayor Trevor Norton +10 Councillors	Mayor Simone Bailey +8 Councillors SAROC Rep	Mayor Peter Hunter +8 Councillors	Mayor Wayne Thorley +9 Councillors	Mayor Ron Valentine +6 Councillors
	CEO	CEO	CEO	CEO	CEO	CEO	CEO	CEO
								
	Tim Pfeiffer	Bridget Mather	Scott Reardon	David Beaton	Ben Scales	Tony Siviour	Heather Barclay	Mark McShane
	Murraylands and Riverland LGA							
MRLGA CEO								
	Carron McLeod							

Board Members

Berri Barmera Council (BBC)	Mayor Ella Winnall (Deputy President)
Coorong District Council (CDC)	Mayor Paul Simmons
District Council of Karoonda East Murray (DCKEM)	Mayor Caroline Phillips (President)
District Council of Loxton Waikerie (DCLW)	Mayor Trevor Norton
Mid Murray Council (MMC)	Mayor Simone Bailey
Renmark Paringa Council (RPC)	Mayor Peter Hunter
Rural City of Murray Bridge (RCMB)	Mayor Wayne Thorley
Southern Mallee District Council (SMDC)	Mayor Ron Valentine

Deputy Delegates (Proxy Members)

Berri Barmera Council (BBC)	Cr Trevor Scott
Coorong District Council (CDC)	Cr Jeff Arthur
District Council of Loxton Waikerie (DCLW)	Cr Clive Matthews
District Council Karoonda East Murray (DCKEM)	Cr Russell Norman
Mid Murray Council (MMC)	Cr Jen Davis and Cr John Forrester
Renmark Paringa Council (RPC)	Cr Margaret Howie
Rural City of Murray Bridge (RCMB)	Cr Andrew Baltensperger
Southern Mallee District Council (SMDC)	Cr Chris Mead

South Australian Regional Organisation of Councils (SAROC) Representatives

1 July 2024 to 17 November 2024

Coorong District Council (CDC)	Mayor Paul Simmons
District Council of Karoonda East Murray	Mayor Caroline Phillips (MRLGA President)

18 November 2024 to 30 June 2025

Mid Murray Council	Mayor Simone Bailey
District Council of Karoonda East Murray	Mayor Caroline Phillips (MRLGA President)

CEO Network

Berri Barmera Council	Tim Pfeiffer
Coorong District Council	Bridget Mather
District Council of Loxton Waikerie	David Beaton
District Council of Karoonda East Murray	Scott Reardon
Mid Murray Council	Ben Scales
Renmark Paringa Council	Tony Siviour
Rural City of Murray Bridge	Heather Barclay
Southern Mallee District Council	Lachlan Miller (July 2024 to January 2025)
	Jason Beaton (April to June 2025)
Murraylands and Riverland Local Government Association	Carron McLeod

MRLGA CEO Network and Committees

At the January 2023 MRLGA Board Meeting, Committees were rationalised to 1 representative per Council, creating a committee of 8 people, plus MRLGA CEO and President. Membership is as follows.

Regional Transport and Asset Committee

BBC	Travis Hay	Acting Manager Infrastructure Services
	Maddie Frew	General Manager, Infrastructure & Env Reg Ser.
CDC	Joshua Bowen	Director of Infrastructure Services
DCLW	Greg Perry	Director of Infrastructure Services
DCKEM	James McInnes	Director of Infrastructure Services
MMC	David Hassett	Director Infrastructure & Field Services
RPC	Tarik Wolf	Director Infrastructure & Environmental Services
RCMB	Thuyen Vi-Alternetti	General Manager Infrastructure & Environment
SMDC	Lachlan Miller	CEO
	Ben Wright	Director of Infrastructure
MRLGA	Carron McLeod	CEO
MRLGA	Mayor Caroline Philips	Ex officio, MRLGA President

Regional Waste & Resource Recovery Committee

BBC	Tracey Alexander (July '24 Jan '25)	Manager Env Reg Services
	Travis Hay (July '24 Jan '25)	Acting Manager of Infrastructure
	Maddie Frew (Feb-June '25)	General Manager, Infrastructure & Env Reg Ser
CDC	Joshua Bowen	Director Infrastructure & Assets
DCLW	Greg Perry	Director of Infrastructure Services
DCKEM	James McInnes	General Manager, Infrastructure
MMC	David Hassett	Director Infrastructure & Field Services
RPC	Tarik Wolf	Director Infrastructure & Environmental Services
RCMB	Thuyen Vi-Alternetti	General Manager Assets & Infrastructure
SMDC	Lachlan Miller	CEO
	Calvin Hoyer (Oct '24-Nov'24)	Director Infrastructure
	Ben Wright (Jan '25 - June '25)	Director Infrastructure
MRLGA	Carron McLeod	CEO
MRLGA	Mayor Caroline Philips	Ex officio, MRLGA President

Regional Public Health and Wellbeing Committee

BBC	Andrew Haigh (July to Dec '24)	Manager Community Development
	Veronica Lambert (Jan to March '25)	Acting Manager Community Services
	Conny Wilson (March to June '25)	General Manager Community Services
CDC	Myles Somers	Director Community and Corporate Services
DCKEM	Scott Reardon	Ceo
	Kate Waters	Project Officer
DCLW	Andrew Waters	Director Commercial and Community Services
MMC	Gary Mavrinac	Director - Development & Community Services
RPC	Alyson Modlinski	Director Community Services
RCMB	Kriston Manson (June-Dec '24)	General Manager Community Development
	David Waters (Feb-June '25)	General Manager Community Development
SMDC	Shilo Wyatt	Manager Property & Development Services
MRLGA	Mayor Caroline Philips	Ex officio, MRLGA President
MRLGA	Carron McLeod	Chief Executive Officer

Performance Management Working Group (associated with the joint Waste Services Contracts) for 5 Councils (as listed):

BBC	Travis Hay	Acting Manager Infrastructure Services
	Tracey Alexander	Manager Environment & Regulatory Services
	Maddie Frew	Director Infrastructure & Env Reg Services
CDC	Joshua Bowen	Director Infrastructure & Assets
	Skye Blythe	Admin Officer for Infrastructure Services
DCLW	Greg Perry	Director of Infrastructure Services
	Kelly Michella	Works Project Officer
RPC	Tarik Wolf	Director Infrastructure & Environmental Services
	Terri Hentschke	EA to Director
RCMB	Thuyen Vi-Alternetti	General Manager of Infrastructure Services
	Sue Reynolds	Manager City Assets
MRLGA	Carron McLeod	CEO

Zone Emergency Management (Chaired by RCMB)

MRLGA Representative:

MRLGA	Carron Mcleod	CEO (Attendee)
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MRLGA Board:

The MRLGA Board met quarterly. Membership of the Board is filled by the Principal Members (Mayor) of each Constituent Council. Meetings of the Board were held on:

1. Friday 9 August 2024
2. Thursday 7 November 2024
3. Thursday 6 February 2025
4. Thursday 10 April 2025

The meetings of the Board also provided a forum for updates and/or presentations from:

- LGA SA Secretariat
- PIRSA
- Regional Development Australia, Murraylands and Riverland
- Landscape Board, Murraylands and Riverland Wellbeing SA (now Preventive Health)
- Office of Small and Family Business
- Murray and Mallee Public Transport
- SA Drought Hub
- One Basin CRC
- DPC, Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO), State Digital Connectivity
- Zone Emergency Management Committee
- Murray Darling Association – Region 5 and Region 6
- Members of Parliament

SA Regional Organisation of Councils

The South Australian Regional Organisation of Councils (SAROC) is a Committee of the LGA that meets bimonthly to focus on key issues affecting country Councils.

MRLGA representatives at SAROC in 2024/25 was:

- President, Mayor Caroline Phillips (of District Council of Karoonda East Murray) and Mayor Paul Simmons (of Coorong District Council) during 1 July 2024 to 17 November 2024
- President, Mayor Caroline Phillips (of District Council of Karoonda East Murray) and Mayor Simone Bailey (of Mid Murray Council) during 18 November 2024 to 30 June 2025.

MRLGA supports SAROC by attending meetings, preparing regional reports and creating discussion at regional quarterly board meetings to inform content in/out of SAROC. The committee met on:

- 18 July 2024 Adelaide
- 3 October 2024 Mount Gambier
- 5 December 2024 Adelaide
- 23 January 2025 Adelaide
- 27 March 2025 Whyalla
- 24 July 2025 Adelaide

CEO Network

The MRLGA CEO Network is established as a strategic advisory group to the MRLGA Board as well as to assist and advise the MRLGA CEO in governance, project delivery and the development and implementation of the Annual Business Plan, or other plans. As the name suggests its membership is the CEOs of the eight constituent councils. The Charter outlines at Clause 7.11.8 that the Network will operate on an informal basis, and is therefore not subject to formal meeting procedures.

The Network provided a range of support including oversight, updates, feedback, guidance and discussion regarding :

• Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy	<i>Resolved the contracts model, future resourcing, regional infrastructure and future advocacy to GISA</i>
• Flood Recovery	<i>Collaboration and strategic positioning regarding the States \$9m 'Council Community and Recreational Asset Restoration Program'.</i>

• Office of Recreation Sport and Racing	<i>Connected and Active Communities Program 3 Year Partnership with all three Riverland Councils and ORSR.</i>
• Preventive Health Partnership	<i>2 Year Partnership model with Preventive Health SA</i>
• Regional Drought Resilience Plan (MR Plan)	<i>Strategic direction, funding models and the central coordination role.</i>
• A.I.	<i>Attended the LGA AI Conference to consider joint initiatives and/or shared services</i>
• Regional Digital Connectivity Plan	<i>Strategic conversations with State Government on its digital plan as well as the NSW VIC Partnership pursuing a joint application along the River Murray across 23 Councils.</i>
• Drought Response	<i>Reviewing council hardship policy approaches, drought response needs and collective responses.</i>

The MRLGA wishes to acknowledge the enormous dedication that regional CEO's play each and every day in our region to:

- Support healthy teams and cultures amongst staff and working environments at Council's
- Guiding successful services, governance, reporting and oversight to Council operations
- Providing leadership, strategic thinking and professionalism to the local government sector and more.

The role they play is instrumental in setting the tone of successful Council operations, and without them the MRLGA would not be as enhanced and capable as it is without them, both individually and collectively.

Zone Emergency Management Committee

Heather Barclay from Rural City of Murray Bridge continued as Chair for ZEMC meetings.

Meetings are convened by SES and were held on the following dates of which MRLGA had attendance and input towards:

- 19 March 2025 Murray Bridge
- 14 May 2025 Loxton

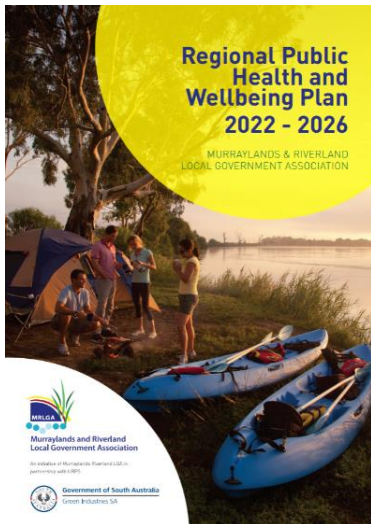
Placed Based Regional Strategies

When regional councils collaborate to develop a region-wide strategy, they can leverage collective strengths and address shared challenges. The benefits include:

- **Resource Efficiency and Cost Sharing:** Collaborating on a strategy allows councils to pool resources, reducing the cost burden on individual councils. Shared services, infrastructure, and expertise can result in significant savings and better resource allocation.
- **Stronger Regional Advocacy:** A unified regional strategy gives councils a stronger voice when advocating for state or federal funding. It allows them to present a cohesive, region-wide vision, which can attract larger-scale investment and government support.
- **Holistic Planning:** Working together enables councils to address broader issues that transcend local boundaries, such as economic development, transport networks, and environmental management. This leads to more balanced and sustainable regional growth.
- **Shared Knowledge and Best Practices:** Collaboration fosters the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and successful initiatives. Councils can learn from each other's experiences, adopting best practices in governance, planning, and service delivery.
- **Improved Resilience and Crisis Management:** Joint strategies are especially beneficial for managing regional crises, such as droughts, natural disasters, or economic downturns. Councils can coordinate their efforts, share resources, and develop more robust contingency plans to enhance regional resilience.

These benefits can lead to stronger, more sustainable communities through cooperation and shared vision.

The following is an update on the regional plans and strategies:

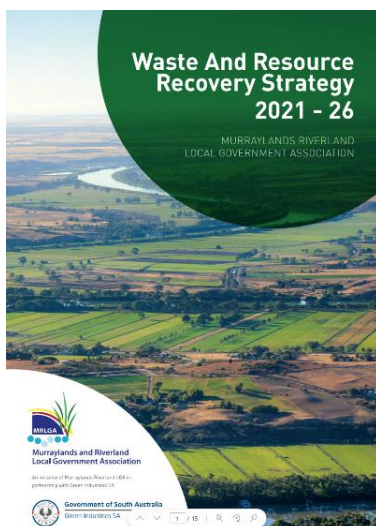


The Regional Public Health and Wellbeing Plan is a statutory plan under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act.

It is overseen by the MRLGA Regional Public Health and Wellbeing Committee. The Committee includes one Director, from each of the 8 constituent Councils.

Key activities and advancements in 2024/25:

- **State Statutory Reporting:** Completed the Section 52 (Public Health Act 2011) report for the South Australian Chief Public Health Officer, a comprehensive update on council responsibilities under public health legislation, submitted bi-annually.
- **Partnership with Office of Recreation, Sport and Racing (ORSR):** MRLGA brokered this partnership, and has been observing sequential achievements and success coming out of its first year of the three-year partnership. District Council of Loxton Waikerie is hosting the central role, and we will liaise with ORSR and the three Riverland Councils to see where opportunities lie to expand and build the program regionally.
- **Emergency Management:** Participated at all Murray and Mallee Zone Emergency Management Committee meetings to support regionwide emergency management networking and planning. Provided a range of support for emergency management including representation at the SES Symposium, advocacy to SafeCOM and DPC on betterment, undertook support and analysis of the Community, Recreation and Asset Restoration Flood Recovery grant, Big Map Disaster Relief and more.
- **Preventive Health SA:** brokered a two year partnership with the State / Preventive Health SA that will see a \$400k investment into the region to help promoting healthy communities.
- **LGA Alignment:** Continued ongoing collaboration with the LGA Public health liaison officer as part of uplift for the portfolio.
- **Foundations SA:** continued liaison with the foundation to promote these opportunities across region.
- **Mental Health Commissioner** – attended webinars from the Commissioner and built relationship with the office to elevate regional needs.



The Regional Waste & Resource Recovery Strategy (and associated Implementation Plan) is a statutory plan. In South Australia, waste management targets for councils are primarily determined by the Green Industries SA (GISA) agency, operating under the Green Industries SA Act 2004. GISA leads the state's waste management and resource recovery strategies, providing guidance, grants, and policy direction. The South Australian Waste Strategy 2020-2025, developed by Green Industries SA, outlines key waste management targets, including reducing landfill, increasing recycling, and improving resource recovery. It aligns with South Australia's overall environmental goals, and councils are required to work within this framework.

Additionally, the Environment Protection Act 1993, administered by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) South Australia, also plays a role in regulating waste management activities, particularly concerning environmental protection standards. Councils are expected to adhere to the targets and strategies set forth by these agencies and legislative acts when managing waste within their jurisdictions.

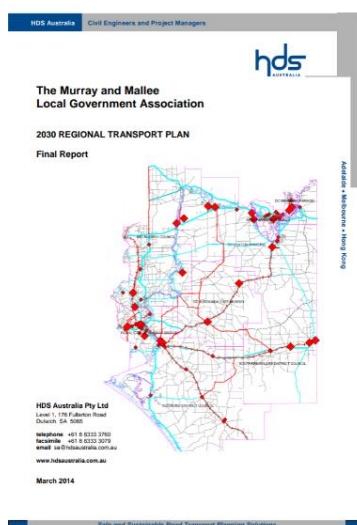
The regional strategy is overseen by the MRLGA Regional Waste & Resource Recovery Committee. The Committee includes one Director, from each of the 8 constituent Councils.

Key activities included:

- **Established Shared Services Models,** we established tow new roles at MRLGA as part of a trialling more shared service models

across Councils. The new roles were Circular Economy & Waste Lead and Waste Education. These roles have enabled the following work to be undertaken.

- **Established cross- Council Waste Service Contract Management via the Performance Management Working Group (PMWG)** with representation from all five regional councils involved in the joint waste services contract. The group meets quarterly and is formed under the governance structure outlined in the contracts. The working group offers Councils an opportunity to unite; and to collate challenges and opportunity's in a cohesive and efficient manner across the region, working towards solutions for improved performance via the waste service contract.
- **Kerbside Waste Service Review** – we commenced the kerbside waste service review, including case study reports and will deliver the draft report to Council before the end of 2025.
- **Waste Education Program** : with 6 key themes and 23 styled activities to grow waste educations across the five participating councils and its communities.



The Regional Transport Plan is the result of collaboration across Councils to have a cohesive road network, and it also conforms to the Local Government Transport Advisory Panel (LGTAP) needs.

The regional plan is overseen by the MRLGA Regional Transport Committee. The Committee includes the Directors of Infrastructure from each of the 8 constituent councils.

This year, MRLGA in consultation with its Regional Transport Committee secured a remarkable \$4.3 million in funding through the Special Local Roads Program (SLRP) for priority road upgrades across councils. These projects are essential for maintaining and enhancing road infrastructure that supports economic growth and connects communities. Through targeted planning we have continued to grow the funding package in size in recent years for regional areas.



The paper was a collaborative piece of work to support Councils as they liaise with State and Federal government on Murray Darling Basin Plan (2.0) reviews and updates, as well as the water recovery discussions that have transpired from the Resilient Rivers Bill. The document is accompanied by a Regional Profile that outlines the evidence and statistics that form the points within the advocacy paper.

MRLGA has remained a support line to Councils while they undertook more hands on consultation with PIRSA as part of business case development work for the Resilient Rivers Infrastructure Program and Sustainable Communities Program. Our recent representation at the annual Murray Darling Basin Authority Conference at Murray Bridge proved critical in understanding the emerging economic data, climate, environment projections, water recovery intel happening across the states and network with MDBA and other MDB stakeholders.

In addition to incremental progress with the above strategy's, the Association also prepared and delivered a :

- Submission to the Federal Inquiry into Local Government Sustainability
- Submission to the State EPA Reform
- Submission to the State Draft Waste Strategy
- Submission to the Productivity Commission on the Future Drought Fund Regional Drought Resilience Planning program

Regional LGA's, Chief Executive Officers

The Regional LGA's Ceo Group is an informal meeting of Executive Officers of the Regional Local Government Associations. Opportunities of collaborating across regional LGA include:

- Provide input into SAROC Business Plan and the Agenda
- Develop a working relationship with the LGA Management team
- Advocate on behalf of the regions and regional initiatives
- Share information and provide collegiate support
- Coordinate collaborative project activity

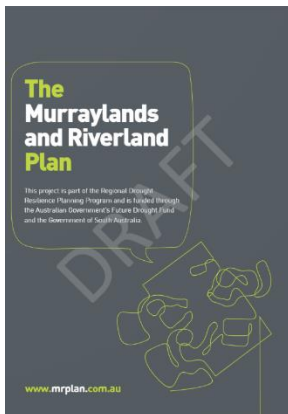
The Association also availed itself to other opportunities occurring in the region including:

Future Drought Fund – Regional Drought Resilience Program

In 20/21 two South Australian regions were selected to participate in a pilot year to develop Regional Drought Resilience Plans. The plans in SA were funded by the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund Program: Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program to the approximate value of \$1.18m.

The MRLGA were invited to participate in a joint partnership with Regional Development Australia, Murraylands and Riverland (RDAMR) and Landscape Board, Murraylands and Riverland to develop a regional drought resilience plan.

For more information on the background, process or a copy of the plan, please visit:



- MR (Drought Resilience) Plan landing page
<https://www.mrplan.com.au/theplan>
- The Process
[https://rdamr.com.au/information/mrplan/#:~:text=The%20Murraylands%20and%20Riverland%20Plan%20\(MR%20Plan\)%20is%20about%20supporting,Riverland%20towards%20achieving%20this%20vision.](https://rdamr.com.au/information/mrplan/#:~:text=The%20Murraylands%20and%20Riverland%20Plan%20(MR%20Plan)%20is%20about%20supporting,Riverland%20towards%20achieving%20this%20vision.)
- Future Drought Fund, Regional Drought Resilience Program
<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/agriculture-land/farm-food-drought/drought/future-drought-fund/regional-drought-resilience-planning#daff-page-main>

In August 2024, PIRSA advised that seed funding for the program would be available and the partnership is working together on the initiative. The funding was then made available in April 2025 and MRLGA has been working with the consortium to partner on drought preparedness initiatives.

Operational (external) Service Agreements

The list below outlines the Service Agreements MRLGA held in 24/25 to support operations or initiatives:

- Payroll and BAS services provided by EKM Accounting
- Formula Accounting for accounting services to prepare the independent audited financial statements
- Rawtec Consulting (associated with the Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy).
- HDS Traffic Engineering – Regional Road Assessments
- Dean Newberry Accountants for annual auditing services