

## **Questions asked at the 2020 MDAS Annual General Meeting (AGM)**

The 2020 MDAS AGM was held on Saturday 28 November 2020. The Board committed to answer all questions asked by members. Most questions were answered on the day. All questions are included below for those Members who could not attend on the day.

### **Questions about how the AGM was run**

*Q: Is this Zoom meeting being recorded?*

A: The meeting was not recorded. A record of the Zoom chat was kept to help to prepare the minutes and this summary of questions and answers.

*Q: Why was my proxy vote not accepted today?*

A: The MDAS constitution and the Corporations Act allow for proxy votes. However, the constitution says that even if a member holds one or more proxy votes, they will only have one vote at the meeting. This is a topic for the constitutional reform project in early 2021.

*Q: Why wasn't community told about the AGM in 2019?*

A: None of the old executive are left to answer that question. It is inexplicable in our view and unacceptable, but we can only focus on the future.

### **Questions about the MDAS constitution, governance and finances**

*Q: How will you address the cultural sickness across the organisation?*

A: Rebuilding integrity; rebuilding trust and putting MDAS back at the heart of the Mallee communities are the priorities of the MDAS reform project. The team are looking at strategies to improve staff morale and culture. This includes a renewed focus on the MDAS values across the organisation, a strong focus on integrity, and a review of staffing levels and structure. Recruiting a permanent CEO is a priority to provide more operational stability. MDAS will also review its policies related to workplace respect and emotional health and wellbeing of staff, with a view to improving workplace culture.

*Q: MDAS is not community controlled. We need the constitution to support community control. Swan Hill and other communities want control of their organisation.*

A: Increasing the MDAS membership and holding a successful AGM were our first priorities. Now we can focus on reforming the MDAS constitution and organisational structure, to make sure they fit community expectations and support best practice governance. In early 2021, MDAS will work with its members across the Mallee to redesign the MDAS constitution and governance. The revised constitution will go to a meeting of members in March 2021.

*Q: Swan Hill wants control of Menera Station*

A: The Indigenous Land Corporation has the lease for Menera station. We will work with members in Swan Hill on the options for reform available to MDAS.

*Q: Why did the continuing board members not step down? Why is there such short time between nominations and voting? Why do Swan Hill, Kerang and Robinvale only have 1 seat at the table?*

A: The process and time frame for director nominations, including directors' terms, and which regions have guaranteed spots, and which members can vote for these, are set in the constitution. These issues can be reviewed as part of the constitutional reform project in early 2021.

*Q: Should we accept the financial report giving the IBAC report hasn't been handed down? How can an auditor sign off on finances when there has been alleged misappropriation of funds? Why wasn't the IBAC report on the agenda?*

A: The financial risks to MDAS that may arise from the IBAC investigation are built into the contingent liability of the organisation. Whether misappropriation of funds has occurred is a matter for IBAC and it is still under investigation. Until IBAC release their findings, this is not a matter the Auditor is able to confirm or address.

#### **Questions about MDAS staff and culture**

*Q: Who are following up with MDAS staff that are too scared to talk up about problems they see?*

A: The Executive Director Jill Gallagher and Acting Chief Executive Officer Jacki Turfrey have made a commitment that MDAS will be more open and transparent going forward. Staff are encouraged to raise issues and to feel safe from reprisal. Neither Jill nor Jacki are connected to any of the past or current management and both have open minds and will listen. Jacki has emailed all staff to let them know who they can confidentially talk to.

*Q: How are you making sure that Aboriginal staff get fair access to MDAS jobs?*

A: As part of the commitment to transparency, all ongoing positions will be put to the market and recruited through a competitive process with preference given to suitably qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Internal opportunities for acting and professional development will be made available to all staff whenever possible to strengthen pathways to promotion for Aboriginal staff.