



Speak Up

Chair Report – AGM 2025

Firstly, a big thank you to everyone for your attendance and participation in today's AGM. I would also like to extend my gratitude for your support and care over the last 12 months while Speak Up was in recess.

Personally, I needed a break to reset and find balance. Although my roles as Speak Up Chair and Executive Officer of MRSG are not full-time, I have become a central figure in connecting people. I spend a lot of time on phone calls and Zoom meetings with various organisations across the South Basin, department staff, and local members.

While Speak Up has been inactive publicly, we have made considerable contributions behind the scenes to advocate on water issues. We have supported individuals in airing their concerns through the media and shared NSWIC with their campaigns through social media. The Murray Regional Strategy Group has employed Garry and me with media and administration.

The overwhelming support from people I don't even know to continue the work Speak Up does has been incredible. While it may not feel like we are achieving significant wins, it is important for people to know that someone is prepared to publicly say what needs to be said and hold our leaders accountable.

The knowledge that people feel we are making a difference and our contributions to the MRSG are key drivers in my decision to stay involved and continue in wider advocacy efforts.

Through MRSG, very successful workshops with CEWH Simon Banks, MDBA's Andrew McConville and Jacquie Hickey, along with NSW Department staff were held. Building relationships is key to gaining traction in change, and it has been encouraging to be involved in these positive steps.

Several exciting projects are coming up with MRSG, which I can outline in the general meeting following the AGM. Ensuring Speak Up is a member is important to the success of MRSG's broader advocacy approach.

A highlight has been the team effort to get Speak Up running again prior to the Victorian by-election and was a great example of what people can achieve with very little. The traction we gained through social media, highlighting the impacts on the cost of living on a small budget, was encouraging.

I would like to finish by thanking the committee for their continued support, Sue Braybon for the thankless task of administration, and as always, Garry Baker for his commitment and dedication to the cause, for which he is extremely underpaid to do.

In conclusion, if re-elected as Chair, I want to be very clear about my capacity to drive Speak Up's initiatives. My family and personal health need to be my top priorities, which I have not always been good at prioritising, but I have learned that they are key to my resilience in a challenging advocacy space.

There are three things that I see as Speak Up's role:

- Issuing media releases when MRSG can't say what needs to be said
- Supporting letters to the editor
- Running a social media campaign targeting Plibersek's electorate and areas with high immigrant populations, highlighting the impacts of water policy on food security and the cost of living