
Indigenous Advisory Committee Bulletin Meeting 38

The Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) held its 38th meeting on 31 March and 1 April 2020 via videoconference.

Review of the EPBC Act

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act Independent Reviewer, Professor Graeme Samuel AC, discussed emerging themes from the Review and Committee members raised a range of issues including how to better support:

- the integration of Indigenous and western-scientific knowledge
- more effective engagement of Indigenous Australians in decisions under the Act
- more effective protection of tangible and intangible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural values and
- involvement of Indigenous Australians providing advice on environmental and heritage matters (given they are often place specific and local scale in nature)

The Committee were appreciative of Professor Samuel's time and are progressing a submission to the EPBC Act Review.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984

The Committee also met with Departmental officials regarding the links between the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984* (ATSIHP Act) and the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The IAC noted reform needed to the ATSIHP Act and that this advice would be included in their submission to the EPBC Act Review.

Review of the Australian Heritage Strategy

Departmental officials presented on the review of the Australian Heritage Strategy (the Strategy) and the development of a Vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage. The Strategy is a high-level document that guides the work of the Department and feedback was sought from the IAC regarding the current scope and objectives of the Strategy. The IAC highlighted the opportunity in refreshing the Strategy to provide greater focus on the importance of Free, Prior and Informed Consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect Indigenous peoples'.

The development of the Vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage is being undertaken by the Heritage Chairs and Officials of Australia and New Zealand with the intent that the Vision will form a key pillar of the Strategy. The IAC has welcomed the move towards more engagement on Indigenous heritage in Australia.

Closing the Gap

Officers from the National Indigenous Australians Agency outlined the current approach of the Agency to developing Land and Water Targets under the Closing the Gap. Members noted that land and water are critical to Indigenous people - and so much more than rights, interests and economic benefits. The Committee recommended inclusion of environment experts on the Coalition of the Peaks. The Committee welcomed the advice of further work being undertaken to progress land and sea country targets.

State of the Environment

The IAC welcomed the decision to engage an Indigenous Chief Author to guide the development of the SoE

Report. The SoE Indigenous Inclusion Strategy has been created and will continue to be refined throughout the project. The Committee also provided advice on Indigenous land and water experts who would be well placed to contribute as chapter authors.

National Environmental Science Program

The IAC met with the National Environmental Science Program (NESP) to discuss findings from the Indigenous Research Needs project, which considers how to embed Indigenous engagement and participation in future investments into environmental research. The Department also highlighted the release of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines for NESP2.0 which includes several criteria for Indigenous involvement.

About the Committee

The Indigenous Advisory Committee is a statutory committee established in 2000 under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

All members of the Committee are Indigenous Australians and are ministerially appointed based on expertise in Indigenous land and sea management, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and cultural heritage management. Members are not appointed to represent particular regions or organisations.

Members:

- Mr Duane Fraser (Acting Chair)
- Ms Teagan Goolmeer (Deputy Chair)
- Mr Robert (Robbie) Dalton
- Dr Leah Talbot
- Ms Chrissy Grant
- Dr Stephen van Leeuwen
- Mr Stan Lui

Further information can be found at <http://www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/committees/iac.html>