

Indigenous Advisory Committee Bulletin Meeting 40

The Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) held its 40th meeting on 17th December 2020 via videoconference.

State of the Environment 2021

The Committee received an update on the State of the Environment 2021 (SoE) report and were pleased to hear that theme drafting had commenced. Indigenous co-Chief Author Dr Janke discussed work on the Indigenous Co-Authorship Strategy that SoE authors will use when engaging with each other to establish a mutually respectful working environment. The Committee was encouraged to hear the SoE had appointed an Indigenous Knowledge Broker for the project and that they are investigating payment and acknowledgement for Indigenous people who share their knowledge.

National Environmental Science Program

The Committee welcomed the launch of phase 2 of the National Environmental Science Program (NESP) and the appointment of an Indigenous Knowledge Broker for the program. The NESP has considered the advice of the Committee and ensured sufficient time for consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the development of research plans. The formation of an Indigenous Engagement and Facilitation Network to guide Indigenous participation and co-design as well as measures to ensure Indigenous representation is embedded into Hub governance structures will strengthen outcomes for the Program as well as Indigenous Australians.

Independent Review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

As Professor Graham Samuel's final report on the review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) has been completed but not tabled, the Committee discussed their future involvement with EPBC Act reform. The Committee will continue to provide advice on the development of Indigenous engagement standards and on reform implementation.

2020 Reflection

The Committee met three times in 2020 and Members provided advice and guidance to range of areas across the portfolio throughout the year:

- Made two submissions to the EPBC Act Review outlining the Committee's call for 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 in providing advice on environmental and heritage matters. The Committee also made a submission to the Standing Committee on the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Streamlining Environmental Approvals) Bill 2020* (Cth). Contributed to the development of a prototype of an Indigenous Engagement Standard for use in the final report of the EPBC Act review.
- Provided Indigenous perspectives for informing Australia's Bushfire recovery and advising on the Indigenous Fire and Land Management grants.
- Provided comment and ongoing advice to inform the development of the Reconciliation Action Plan for the merged Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.

- Provided advice to the National Indigenous Australians Agency on the establishment of the Land and Water Closing The Gap target (Target 15) to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters.
- Worked with the department and the National Indigenous Australians Agency on Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) and participated in an IPA Roundtable to discuss how the program could be improved, and how to better connect to IPA managers and key stakeholders.
- Supported the work of the Indigenous representatives of the Australian Heritage Council on the Best Practice Standards for Indigenous Cultural Heritage Legislation and Vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage in Australia.
- The Committee worked with the department to explore options to maximise outcomes of Indigenous and western science and to embed Indigenous science knowledge further into the Department through the Science Strategy.
- Reviewed scoping papers for each theme of the SoE 2021 report and advised on governance for the project.
- Continued to advise on the NESP and encourage the continued improvement of the program's Indigenous engagement and participation.

In 2021 the Committee looks forward to continuing its vital advisory functions to inform not only matters under the EPBC Act but also policy and program development across the department.

About the Committee

The IAC is a statutory committee established in 2000 under the EPBC Act.

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

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