



Indigenous Advisory Committee Bulletin No.3

Meeting 27

26-27 November 2013, Canberra, ACT

The Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC or Committee) held its 27th meeting in Canberra. A range of issues relevant to the Committee were discussed with officers from the Department of the Environment. These included regulatory reforms of the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), the recent transfer of Indigenous environmental programmes to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) and Indigenous heritage issues.

The Department provided updates and sought consultation on key Australian Government election commitments currently being implemented; the Turtle and Dugong Protection Plan, the National Landcare programme, Green Army, 20 Million Trees, Reef 2050 and the 'One stop shop' for environmental approvals.

The IAC agreed to provide advice to Departmental staff on the development of the four components of the Government's Direct Action Plan for the Governments' Response to Climate Change.

The IAC also met with the Australian Heritage Council (AHC), which was an opportunity to discuss matters of shared interest, as well as sign a joint protocol to guide engagement between the two bodies. Following this, the two bodies met with the Hon. Greg Hunt MP, Minister for the Environment.

Transfer of Indigenous Environmental Programmes to PM&C

PM&C will continue to engage with the Department of the Environment following the recent machinery of government changes that brought a suite of Commonwealth Indigenous policy and programme areas into PM&C. The programmes transferred from the Department of the Environment are; Working on Country, Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA), Indigenous Heritage Programme and the Indigenous Carbon Farming Fund.

The IAC will continue to maintain an interest in the delivery mechanisms for these programmes as the changes come into effect.

It was noted that IPAs will remain part of the National Reserve System and as such there is still scope for the IAC to advise on them, as per the Committee's terms of reference. At the operational level, the Department and PM&C are negotiating mechanisms for this engagement to continue.

The Indigenous Land Management Officers (ILMOs) and their responsibilities have also been transferred to PM&C.

Turtle and Dugong Protection Plan

The Committee was provided with an update on the Turtle and Dugong Protection Plan and continues to maintain a high level of interest in the progress of the legislation, funding and implementation.

'One stop shop' for environmental approvals

As a statutory committee appointed under the EPBC Act, the IAC has a strong interest in the proposed regulatory reforms. The Committee sought an opportunity from the Regulatory Reform Taskforce to be engaged in various facets of the reform as well as undertaking to provide written submissions where possible.

As at 31 December 2013, the IAC had made written submissions to the Department on the draft NSW and QLD bilateral agreements and will continue to be engaged with this process into 2014.

Great Barrier Reef Strategic Assessment

The IAC was provided with an update on the two components to the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) Strategic Assessment. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and the Queensland (QLD) Government are currently seeking public comment on their draft strategic assessment and programme reports for the Great Barrier Reef Region and adjacent Coastal Zone. The period for public comment opened on 1 November 2013 and closes on 31 January 2014.

Following the 12 week public comment period, the QLD Government and GBRMPA will revise their strategic assessment and programme reports before seeking Minister Hunt's endorsement of the respective programmes under the EPBC Act.

Public comment on the draft EPBC Act Referral Guidelines for the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area closed in October 2013. All comments, including those received from the IAC, are currently being considered in finalising the guidelines. When released, the guidelines will assist proponents to determine whether their proposed action needs to be referred under Part 7 of the EPBC Act.

Joint Meeting of the full IAC and AHC

At the joint meeting the Chairs of IAC and the AHC signed a protocol to formally engage on Indigenous issues and provide guidance on matters connected with the role of both groups. This document outlines their respective legislative functions, role and responsibilities; the agreed outcomes and the relationship between the secretariats.

The protocol also ensures that the AHC and the IAC will:

- continue a co-operative approach to the protection and conservation of heritage;
- promote a co-operative approach to the protection and management of the environment by recognising the role of Indigenous people in the environment;
- promote the use of Indigenous people's knowledge of heritage with the involvement of, and in cooperation with the owners of the Indigenous ecological knowledge;
- acknowledge the spirit, aims and objectives of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and
- reflect the objects set out in *Part 1 Section 3(d), (f) & (g) of Chapter 1* in EPBC Act.



Acting Chair of the Indigenous Advisory Committee, Ms Chrissy Grant (left) and Chair of the Australian Heritage Council, Professor Carmen Lawrence (right) – signing the joint protocol.

IAC and AHC joint meeting with the Hon. Greg Hunt MP, Minister for the Environment



Minister Hunt (left, centre) meets with the IAC and AHC.

Minister Hunt spoke about his new approach on heritage issues to a joint meeting of the IAC and AHC. Heritage is one of the four pillars in the environment portfolio under the Coalition. Minister Hunt is very enthusiastic about heritage and outlined his key objectives in a [recent speech to International Council on Monuments and Sites \(ICOMOS\)](#).

The Minister, noting that the Indigenous environmental and heritage programmes have been transferred to PM&C, reaffirmed the Australian Government's commitment to continued support for Indigenous natural and cultural resource management.

Dates for the next IAC meeting

The date for the next IAC is yet to be confirmed, but expected in April 2014.

Contact

Should you require more information please contact the IAC secretariat on 02 6275 9212 or email iac@environment.gov.au

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