

Indigenous Advisory Committee Bulletin No.6 Meeting 30

27-28 May 2015, Canberra, ACT

The Indigenous Advisory Committee (the Committee) held its 30th meeting on 27-28 May 2015 in Canberra. The meeting, chaired by Ms Melissa George, focused on progress towards the Committee's work plan, previously endorsed by the Minister for the Environment, the Hon Greg Hunt MP.

The primary focus of the meeting was to discuss key priority work plan activities including: *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984* (ATSIHPA) reform; future policy directions for Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) and the National Reserve System (NRS); Indigenous engagement and participation under the National Environmental Science Programme (NESP); development of a National Land and Sea Managers Network; and progress towards the traditional owner species management framework.

The Committee was also provided with updates and progress on a number of new and continuing issues including: the Dugong and Turtle Protection Plan; the Green Army Programme; One Stop Shop reforms; review of Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, the Great Barrier Reef; and the work of the Threatened Species Commissioner.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act (ATSIHPA) reform

The Committee considered a draft scoping paper on future reform of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984* (ATSIHPA). The scoping paper focuses on key areas of reform to address timing and efficiency of processes and the establishment of best practice standards. The Committee agreed to revisit the standards proposed back in 2009 and consider their potential applicability to the reform.

The Committee also agreed to engage the two Australian Heritage Council Indigenous representatives to work closely with the Committee and the Department to assist in progressing these reforms in the near future.

Future policy directions – Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) and the National Reserve System (NRS)

The Committee met with Department of the Environment and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) representatives to discuss the Government's current examination of future policy directions for IPAs, and the related linkages to, and consistency with, the broader NRS policy agenda. The Committee welcomed this important work, reiterating its concerns around the long-term viability of IPAs beyond the current funding commitment to 2017-18.

The Committee heard that future IPA policy will focus on increasing private and philanthropic funding to projects and supporting future employment opportunities. The Committee will continue to engage in this process by providing PM&C with assistance in developing the policy objectives, particularly around engaging with relevant stakeholders.

National Environmental Science Programme (NESP)

The Committee was provided with an overview of the NESP progress to date and took the opportunity to provide the Department with feedback on the Hub priorities and research plans. The Committee agreed and supported the proposition that steps had been taken to ensure that each of the new hubs develop Indigenous Engagement and Participation Strategies.

National Land and Sea Managers Network

The Committee discussed and considered a range of broad issues around how best to structure a national network. The Department will investigate options to progress a more detailed scoping project.

Meeting with the Minister

The Committee met with Minister Hunt at Parliament House to provide him with an update on progress against its work plan priorities. In particular, the Committee discussed the following issues:

- continued and improved Indigenous engagement on the National Environmental Science Programme
- cross-boundary issues with Papua New Guinea and the potential for mining development to have impacts on reef water quality and also fisheries in the region
- incentives for Green Army Programme service providers to subcontract Indigenous organisations.

The Minister also asked Committee members to work with the Indigenous members of the Australian Heritage Council to progress ATSIHPA reforms.

The Minister suggested the development of an Indigenous Environment Strategy, to be prepared between the Committee, PM&C and the Department. This is an opportunity to highlight the interwoven environmental and Indigenous outcomes in both portfolios and the continued contribution of programmes such as IPAs and Working on Country, as well as other innovative concepts such as for offsets and native title.

About the Committee

The Indigenous Advisory Committee is a statutory committee established in 2000 under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the Act). The Committee's role is to advise the Minister for the Environment on the operation of the Act, taking into account the significance of Indigenous peoples' knowledge of the management of land and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Members

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.

Current members are:

- Ms Melissa George (Chair)
- Mr Bruce Martin (Deputy Chair)
- Ms Denise Lovett

- Ms Josie Douglas
- Mr Wayne See Kee
- Mr Ricky Archer
- Ms Teagan Goolmeer
- Mr Joseph Elu
- Mr Robbie Dalton.

Further information can be found at

<http://www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/committees/iac.html>